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ABSTRACT

The 2000 edition of this annual guidebook presents a range of different ideas and strategies to help counselors promote greater public awareness of the profession during Counseling Awareness Month (April) and throughout the year. The eight categories included are: (1) Celebrating Counseling Awareness Month; (2) Promoting Public Awareness in April and Throughout the Year; (3) Group Participation in Civic and Charitable Activities; (4) Participating in Professional Organizations; (5) Delivering Speeches and Presentations; (6) Working with the Media; (7) Participating in Counseling Awareness Month; and (8) Helpful Resources for Use in Public Awareness Materials. (JDM)

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For use during Counseling Awareness Month and throughout the year

Professional Counseling

creating hope • creating change

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Single copies of this publication are available without charge to ACA members.
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Celebrating Counseling Awareness Month

Stuart Chen-Hayes, Co-Chair

Each year, ACA encourages all professional counselors to promote our profession during the month of April, Counseling Awareness Month. Why promote our profession? Because many members of the public don't know who we are, and others are mired in outdated myths and stereotypes. So, we can use our professional skills in building relationships with persons new to professional counseling quickly and effectively on our own or in collaboration with professional journalists or other community, school, or agency partners.

This packet, *Public Awareness Ideas and Strategies for Professional Counselors,* is your one-stop resource for promoting professional counseling, including tips on dealing with the media and delivering presentations. We take you through the public relations process, step-by-step. Do not hesitate to contact any of the Public Awareness & Support committe members if we can be of any assistance throughout the year. Best wishes!

So, to start, here are the top ten professional counseling promotional ideas related to our vision: that some day soon all persons will know who we are as professional counselors with our theme, "Creating Hope, Creating Change":

1. **Call or write your TV, radio, cable station and newspaper** with story ideas about professional counselors in your local schools and agencies. Send a press release highlighting the latest activities or awards related to professional counseling.

2. **Interview a current or former client,** student, parent, administrator or supervisor regarding how professional counseling has made a difference in their lives and ask them to write a letter to the editor praising professional counselors and their role in agencies and schools.

3. **Create your own professional counseling Internet webpage** to promote professional counseling on the Internet. Link to your favorite professional counseling sites, such as www.counseling.org, www.nbcc.org, counseling listserves, and so forth.

4. **Create a counseling listserve** on the Internet in your community and advertise it in the media to assist people with questions related to referrals for professional counselors in your area.

5. **Sponsor a community agency or school-related counseling event** (wellness, anti-violence, cultural diversity, building healthy families, stress management, etc.) and invite local media to cover it through press releases and photo opportunities. Advertise informally through community flyers and bulletin boards promoting professional counseling in schools and agencies.

6. **Request professional counselor license plates** be designed and purchased for use each April by professional counselors in your state to promote professional counseling (Thanks to the the Illinois School Counselors Association for the idea). Or, create your own vanity plate for your car: ICOUNSEL or NCC 1 or LPC 1 or ILUVACA.

7. **Create a Professional Counseling flyer or brochure** that explains who professional counselors are, what we do, our credentials, our code of ethics and professional practice standards, and how we are similar to and different than other mental health professionals.

8. **Come out as a professional counselor**. Find a friend or colleague or total stranger and ask them what they know about professional counselors. Use this as an opportunity to educate. Or, volunteer your time as a professional counselor in a community service project.

9. **Call, or better yet, visit your local and state legislator(s)**. Introduce yourself as a professional counselor and ask how you can collaborate on legislation to support the needs of our clients and the profession.

10. **Throw a Counselorware party** (Instead of tupperware, you invite clients, students, administrators or business owners to an open house where you describe your professional counseling services and give away flyers on professional counseling services and freebies related to professional counseling.)

We'd love to hear your ideas to promote professional counseling and Counseling Awareness Month. E-mail your ideas to me at *swagalu@earthlink.net* or to Cheryl Haas at ACA HQ's: *chaas@counseling.org*.

Promoting Public Awareness In April And Throughout The Year

It's not difficult to sell professional counselors on the importance of public awareness to their daily work and the future of the profession.

Too many people do not know who we are, the extent of our training, and how we help individuals throughout the lifespan lead healthier, happier, and more productive lives. Too often, we feel "invisible."

That "invisibility," that public ignorance, is frustrating and it hurts us personally and professionally. We sometimes lose jobs to others who are less experienced and less well-trained. School and college administrators overburden us with administrative work, leaving little time to work directly with students. We are sometimes denied insurance reimbursement and access to managed care panels. Policy-makers and administrators think career and employment counseling can be provided by computer terminals in shopping malls. Funding for counseling services in schools, community and public agencies is frozen or reduced. The list goes on and on.

But for the individuals we are committed to serving, the consequences of this lack of public awareness of the profession are more often tragic than they are frustrating.

How many students drop out or perform poorly in school or college because the institution did not invest adequately in counseling services?

How many ended marriages and relationships could have been preserved had the partners worked with a professional counselor?

How many men and women went for weeks and months without a job because they did not have access to the assistance of career, employment and rehabilitation counselors?

How many people could have led happier, more fulfilling lives had they worked with a professional counselor?

The "invisibility" of professional counseling is not just a problem for us, it is problem for all of the men, women, and young people that we have committed ourselves to serving.

A Role for Each of Us

Sometimes, in our frustration, we often lose sight of the important ways that each of us can contribute to promoting greater recognition of the counseling profession. We not only feel "invisible," but also powerless to change that.

But we are *not* powerless.

There are many meaningful ways that each of us can contribute to enhancing public awareness of the profession, whatever our talents and interests, and whatever the constraints on our time.

This guide highlights a range of different ideas and strategies that can be utilized to promote greater public awareness of yourself and your profession in April and throughout the year.

Some of them are simple and can be carried out in a brief amount of time. Others require a more significant time commitment. All of them, however, will contribute to enhanced public awareness. Don't assume that the only activity that "counts" is something that requires weeks of planning to implement. ***Everything*** counts.

Indeed, if each one of the more than 50,000 members of the American Counseling Association carried out just one public awareness activity in April, can you imagine the result? What a powerful impact we would have!

The Importance Of Defining Clear Objectives

You're ready, you're eager, you've made time in your schedule to take on a public awareness project. Where do you begin?

Begin with some careful thought and reflection. The most successful public awareness initiatives have clearly defined, narrow objectives. They target a particular audience with a specific message. They should also involve activities that you enjoy, feel comfortable with, and have time to do.

For these reasons, before embarking on a public awareness effort, we encourage you first to take some time to:

- Define some clear objectives for your efforts, including the target audience(s) that you want to reach;
- Identify some possible messages and themes that will be compelling to your audience(s);
- Inventory the resources, skills, and interests that you can utilize in your efforts.

Thinking about the following questions may be helpful to you in setting your objectives and identifying some possible activities that you want to pursue.

Your Audience

Who are the key decision-makers who influence the delivery and availability of counseling services in your school, institution, or community? Whose decisions directly affect your ability to practice as a professional counselor?

This list could include agency administrators, principals, school board members, parents, students, consumers, healthcare executives, employers, benefit managers, and many more.

How do these decision-makers perceive professional counselors and counseling services?

What issues are important to these decision-makers? What objectives drive their decision-making?

A school principal, for example, may be concerned about school safety and student achievement. A company benefits manager may be concerned about health care costs, employee satisfaction, and on-the-job performance. Consumers want to lead happy, satisfying and productive lives.

How can the work of professional counselors facilitate the achievement of these objectives?

What groups and individuals in the community influence the views of these decision-makers? Who do they respect?

Skills and Resources

What resources do you have that can assist you in carrying out public awareness activities?

This could include, for example, membership and participation in community and civic organizations or personal relationships with elected officials, reporters, or business executives.

What special skills and interests do you have that can be used?

Are you a skilled writer or public speaker, for example? Are you a great organizer?

What do you like to do?

How much time can you contribute?

Are there other professional counselors in your school, institution, or community who may also be interested in working on public awareness activities with you?

The Environment

What issues are an ongoing, important concern to members of your school, institution or community? Are there particular issues that come up over and over in your local newspaper?

These might include, for example, recovery and rebuilding from a flood or major disaster, ongoing problems associated with overdevelopment, economic change, substance abuse, school overcrowding, crime and violence, and many more.

How can the skills and expertise of professional counselors be used to address these issues?

Thinking about these questions will help you identify some clear public awareness objectives and determine the kinds of strategies and activities that you can and want to pursue.

And remember: an effective public awareness initiative does not require a massive, year-long campaign. Target your efforts. Do what you can do, even if it may only be one, limited activity. Do what you enjoy doing. Make public awareness activities fun, not a miserable chore.

professional involvement

Participating In Professional Organizations

There is one very simple public awareness tool that you are already using: participating in a professional organization.

Membership in a national or branch association communicates to the public that you are part of a dynamic, emerging profession that is dedicated to improving the well-being of people throughout the life-span. That you adhere to a rigorous code of ethics in your work. And that you are committed to continually enhancing your skills and knowledge as a professional counselor.

It's a powerful statement – don't hesitate to make it.

List your membership affiliations on your professional disclosure statement or other materials that you use in presenting yourself to the public. Display the ACA *Professional Counseling: Creating Hope Creating Change* poster or other similar posters that proclaim proudly your professional identity. Share articles from *Counseling Today* or journals with colleagues or others who may be interested in them.

If you make a presentation at an association conference, send out a brief press release to opinion-makers to let them know about it: the local or school newspaper, school board members, the school newspaper, etc.

If an article you've written is published in a journal or other counseling publication, share copies of your work with opinon-makers.

You've earned recognition from your peers for your work. Why not let others outside the profession know about it?

Be proud of the commitment you have made to professional excellence by joining and participating in the American Counseling Association.

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Group Participation In Civic And Charitable Activities

Many of us participate in community and religious organizations and donate time or money to causes and charities that we believe in. We don't do it for public recognition. We do it because it's fulfilling, rewarding, and often, a lot of fun.

But participating in community service and charitable activities can also be a great way to enhance public awareness of the counseling profession—while at the same time helping others and improving the well-being of the community.

A great way to commemorate Counseling Awareness Month, National School Counseling Week, National Mental Health Counselors Week, National Career Development Month and other special events is to organize a group of professional counselors to volunteer time or make a financial contribution to a local charity or civic organization. Your group could be members of your branch or chapter, other professional counselors working in your school district, agency, or institution, or simply a group of your friends and colleagues.

The possible activities you might pursue together as a group are literally endless, but the following are some ideas that you might consider:

- Sponsor an "adopt a grandparent day" at a local nursing home or adult day care facility.
- Sponsor or participate in a run or walk to raise funds for a local or national charity or service organization, such as the "Race for a Cure" for breast cancer. Sponsor an educational booth on the site of the event and distribute information on counseling and the services of professional counselors that are relevant to the focus of the event.
- Sponsor a baking or cooking competition with a minimum entry fee that will be donated to a local charity.
- Donate educational videos on issues of concern to the counseling profession to your local video chain for free use by the public. Most chains maintain a section of educational videos that are available for rental free of charge. Enhance their collections with educational videos on parenting skills, career development, child development, substance abuse, relationship issues, mental health, aging, or other issues that you consider important. Include the name of your group on the video case. If appropriate, also include a "for more information" phone number that renters can call. This could be the phone number of your branch, chapter, or agency, or the number of a community resource and referral agency. Be sure to promote your donation with a news release to the local media, as well as with flyers that can be distributed in the store.
- Help out a local soup kitchen or assist with a food drive.
- Organize a blood drive with the local chapter of the Red Cross.
- Make a donation to your local public radio station in celebration of Counseling Awareness Month.
- Donate books and educational videos on issues of concern to the counseling profession to your local library. Working together as a group, assess the quality and breadth of the library's collection on career

development, parenting, mental health and other issues. Are there resources missing that you and your group recommend? Meet with the chief librarian or head of acquisitions to discuss making your donation. Ask that each resource donated include the name of your group. Publicize the donation with news releases to the local media.

- Organize a clothing drive in conjunction with a domestic violence or homeless shelter to collect professional clothing that can be worn by residents on job interviews.

- Answer phones as a group during a public television or radio fundraising drive and request that your group's participation be noted on the air.

- Sponsor a "thank you" breakfast or other meal event to honor individuals who contribute to the well-being of your school, agency, or community. Honorees might include persons who volunteer at your school or in the community, athletic coaches, leaders of youth programs, clergy, law enforcement officials, and others.

- Cut back on what you would have spent for a holiday party or other group celebration and donate the money you saved to charity.

If you do carry out a group volunteer or service activity, publicize your project with a news release to the local media, either before or after the event, as appropriate. See page 26 of this guide for more information about how to prepare and distribute a release.

Participating In National Screening Day Initiatives

Coalitions of mental health professionals and advocates currently sponsor five different nationwide screening initiatives designed to assist concerned members of the public in finding out if they are suffering from a substance abuse or mental disorder and could benefit from mental health treatment. On designated screening days, mental health professionals around the nation sponsor screening sites and volunteer their time to interview, assess, and provide information to members of the public about treatment options.

Participating in these initiatives, either as a site sponsor or as a volunteer, is another important way that professional counselors can expand awareness of their role as providers of mental health care--while at the same time addressing unmet mental health needs in their communities.

In general, screening sites should be facilities that can accommodate large numbers of people and are accessible to the community, such as community mental health centers, senior citizen or child care centers, hospitals, and college counseling centers. Private practitioners can also team up with local chapters of the National Mental Health Association or other community groups to sponsor a site at community facilities such as public libraries, YMCAs, and local government buildings.

A registration fee is charged for each screening site. Sponsors receive procedure manuals and all materials needed to conduct the screenings, as well as assistance in publicizing the availability of the screening to members of their community.

The following screening events will be held over the next year:

— *National Depression Screening Day* —

October 5, 2000

The focus of National Depression Screening Day is to call attention to the illness of depression on a national level, to educate the public about its symptoms and effective treatments, to offer individuals the opportunity to be screened for depression, and to connect those in need of treatment to the mental health care system. The fee for registering as a screening site is $125. The deadline for registration is August 1, 2000. For more information, contact:

National Mental Illness Screening Project
One Washington Street - Suite 304
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181-1706
(781) 239-0071

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National Eating Disorders Screening Program

February 19-26, 2000

The National Eating Disorders Screening Program (NEDSP) is implemented during Eating Disorders Awareness Week and was held for the first time on more than 600 college campuses in 1996.

NEDSP includes an educational presentation on eating disorders and/or related topics (body image, nutrition, etc.), a written screening test, and the opportunity to meet one-on-one with a mental health professional. It also provides individuals with information about how to help friends or family members who may be suffering from an eating disorder.

National Eating Disorders Screening Program is set on a bi-aunnal basis. The next NEDSP will be in 2001. For more information, contact:

National Mental Illness Screening Project
One Washington Street - Suite 304
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181-1706
(781) 239-0071

National College Anxiety Disorders Screening Day

March 2000

Since the May date of National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day falls late in the semester, a special National College Anxiety Disorders Screening Day targeting college and university students has been established. The goal of the program is prevention and early intervention regarding anxiety disorders among college student populations.

Screenings may take place on any day during the month of March. Registered sites receive screening forms, educational pamphlets, posters, a video, information on anxiety disorders and available treatments, organizing guidelines, and a step-by-step manual with instructions for conducting screenings. The fee for registering as a screening site is $75. The deadline for registration for 2000 has not been set as of this writing, but is likely to be in January 2000. For more information, contact:

Freedom from Fear
308 Seaview Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10305
(718) 351-1717

National Alcohol Screening Day

April 6, 2000

National Alcohol Screening Day is designed to call attention to alcohol problems on a national level, to educate the public about symptoms of, and effective treatments for, alcohol problems, and to connect those in need with available treatments.

For more information, contact:

National Mental Illness Screening Project
One Washington Street - Suite 304
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181
(781) 239-0071

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day

May 3, 2000

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day, founded in 1993 and held each May during Mental Health Month, educates the public about anxiety disorders, their symptoms and treatment options. Free anonymous screenings for five anxiety disorders are offered at screening sites throughout the nation. Registered sites receive screening forms, pamphlets, posters, a video, information on anxiety disorders and available treatments, organizing guidelines, and a step-by-step manual with instructions for conducting screenings. The registration fee for screening sites is $100. The deadline for registeringhas not been determined as of this writing, but is likely to be in early March of 2000. For information , contact:

Freedom from Fear
308 Seaview Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10305
(718) 351-1717

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Delivering Speeches And Presentations

Delivering speeches and presentations before community and professional groups, in workplaces, at public libraries, and other forums and settings is a powerful way to increase public awareness and recognition of your expertise as a professional counselor. It can also be effective in establishing positive, collaborative relationships with important leaders in the community, as well as in developing new sources for referrals.

But I Hate Public Speaking!

You're not alone. In national opinion surveys, public speaking frequently ranks high on lists of people's greatest fears—sometimes ranked higher than illness and death! Though they have superior training in communication and listening skills, many professional counselors are reluctant to speak before groups. That's okay. It's not for everyone, and even some of those who excel at public speaking don't consider it one of their most pleasurable pursuits.

But before you dismiss the idea altogether, we hope that you will first think more carefully about it and the reasons for your reluctance.

Is it because you think you must be a polished, silver-tongued orator? That isn't what it takes to be an effective speaker. In his book, *How to Speak Like a Pro* (1983), Leon Fletcher, an accomplished educator in the art of public speaking, argues that:

> Today most effective speakers talk in conversational tones. They are informal. Personable. Today, most good speakers talk with—not at—their listeners...Be yourself and you are more likely to get your ideas across, deliver information, stimulate action.

You don't need to be a "toastmaster," an actor or performer to deliver an effective presentation. You need to be yourself.

Are you reluctant to speak because you don't think you have anything to say that others will be interested in hearing? Forget that. As a professional counselor, you possess an enormous body of knowledge that most people are eager to tap. How many of your friends and acquaintances gently (or not so gently) prod you for your insights into issues in their lives? So long as you tailor your presentation to the interests of your audience, you don't need to worry about their lack of interest in what you have to say.

Still reluctant to speak before a group? How about teaming up with another professional counselor to make the presentation? Using a team approach often relieves a lot of the anxiety that many of us feel about public speaking.

What Do I Talk About?

The topic of your presentation should be based first, and most importantly, on your interests and areas of expertise. If you're not interested in the topic or feel uncomfortable addressing it, your presentation is going to be unpleasant for you, and possibly for your audience as well. What are ***you*** interested in speaking about? What expertise do you have that would benefit others if you shared it with them?

Keying into the needs and interests of your audience is also important. In general, audiences tend to be most interested in presentations that:

- Teach new skills
- Help solve problems
- Offer new perspectives on issues
- Enhance the quality of their lives
- Relate to topics and issues that directly concern them
- Do not appear overly self-promotional

In other words, in thinking about possible presentations that you could make, assume the perspective of your intended audience. What knowledge do you have that applies to their particular concerns? How can you share your knowledge in a brief presentation so that it will be meaningful and useful to them? How can you promote learning, thoughtful reflection, and application of your knowledge by the audience?

Much of this should sound familiar to you. In many ways, public speaking is simply an extension and application of the skills you already use in individual or group counseling, but in a different setting.

Avoiding excessive self-promotion in any form is also important. Let's face it—would you want to sit through a lecture by a Certified Public Accountant about why he or she should do your taxes instead of H & R Block? Probably not. Remember, you are already delivering a powerful message about your skills and expertise, as well as those of other professional counselors, simply by making an effective, informative presentation.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't include information about the training, education and qualifications of professional counselors, or the value of school counseling programs, or similar issues in your presentation. You should. But whenever possible, put the focus of your presentation on demonstrating your expertise in a way that connects to your audience, rather than simply stating it as a given.

Depending upon your audience and your interests and expertise, possible topics for presentations could include:

- Career development and advancement
- Parenting and parent-child communication
- Enhancing the quality of relationships
- Managing stress
- Dealing with difficult people
- Coping with physical illness and disability
- Depression and the "blues"
- Breaking bad habits
- Loneliness
- Assertiveness skills
- Improving self-image and self-esteem
- Balancing work and family
- Teaching children self-discipline
- Adapting to adult life transitions
- Helping young people plan for postsecondary education and employment.

Also keep an eye on news stories, the best-seller lists, and other indicators of what is currently of interest to the general public. They can often give you other useful ideas for "hot topics" that would be of interest to an audience.

But Where Do I Speak?

There are many possibilities for delivering speeches and presentations in your community. Some of the options--from community meetings to adult education classes--are outlined below.

Speaking At Meetings Of Community Organizations

Dozens of organizations that meet throughout the year in your community welcome presentations by guest speakers, including:

- Parent associations;
- Chapters of the Kiwanis, NAACP, Urban League, LULAC, Rotary, Lions, Junior League, and other service and social organizations;
- Organizations of other professionals, such as physicians, lawyers, teachers, sales and marketing executives, small-business owners, and Women in Business chapters;
- Civic and political organizations, both nonpartisan and partisan, such as chapters of the League of Women Voters, Young Democrats and Young Republicans;
- Parents Without Partners;
- Sororities, fraternities, and alumni groups;
- Union locals;
- Senior citizen centers.

For more ideas about possible organizations at which you could present, check out the events

section of your local newspaper. Most local Chambers of Commerce also maintain a list of local business and professional organizations.

Getting Started

Identify several organizations that sound like promising prospects based on your interests and expertise, as well as the public awareness objectives that you have established for yourself.

Do some background research about these organizations, including the focus of the organization, who their members are and what their interests are, how often they meet, their meeting format, and topics of past presentations. You may have friends or colleagues who are members of the organizations. Chamber of Commerce publications, public libraries, and newspaper listings are also good sources of information. Or, if appropriate, attend one of the meetings yourself.

For each organization, identify a list of possible topics that might interest the members of the organization and upon which you have expertise.

Contact the president or program chairperson of the organization to express your interest in speaking, presenting the list of possible topics you have identified, why you think they might interest the organization's members, and some background about your expertise on the issue. In some cases, this can be done with a phone call. In most cases, however, it's probably best to write a brief letter.

Sponsoring Workshops For Groups Of Professionals

Another, more ambitious approach is to sponsor a workshop for groups of professionals in the community who may not be part of an existing network or organization that meets on a regular basis. The expertise of professional counselors would be of great interest to many groups of professionals, particularly those who work directly with the public on an extended basis. These include, for example:

- Attorneys
- Members of the clergy
- Physicians
- Nurses and other health care professionals
- Law enforcement officers
- Court employees

A wide range of topics may be of interest to these groups of professionals, such as presentations on:

- Effective communication and interpersonal skills, particularly when dealing with individuals who are angry, distressed or mentally ill
- Grief and bereavement
- Marriage, family, and relationship issues
- Child and adolescent development
- Aging and adult development
- Addiction
- Identifying depression
- Mental illness and treatment
- Stress management and job burnout
- Substance use and abuse

In many cases, these professionals also may have expertise that would be of interest to you as well. In these cases, workshops can also be structured to incorporate dialogue and information-sharing.

Getting Started

Since planning and carrying out a workshop of this kind is time-consuming, you may want to consider teaming up with one or more other professional counselors to divide the labor involved.

You can develop a mailing list of professionals who may be invited to the presentation by consulting the Yellow Pages, local professional societies, and the local Chamber of Commerce.

Presentations for health care professionals may also be arranged by collaborating with a hospital or other health care facility or by consulting with the local union that represents nurses and other health care employees.

Presentations for law enforcement officers might be arranged by contacting an administrator at your local law enforcement agency or by speaking with the head of the local union that represents law enforcement employees.

Partnering With Public Libraries

Many public library branches sponsor or host presentations by speakers as part of their general mission to address the information needs of the community. Their other objectives in hosting presentations may include:

- increasing public use of the library by attracting members of the public who might not otherwise visit the library, or
- enhancing or highlighting particular library services or resources.

For example, presentations might be made to parents while children participate in "story hours" or other reading programs, or a workshop on career development might be presented that includes information about the resources available through the library.

Getting Started

Identify who is responsible for public events and outreach at your local library by calling or visiting your local branch. Public library systems are managed differently in every community. In larger communities where there are several branches, decisions about programming and outreach activities may be made by the manager or director of each branch. In smaller communities, these decisions are more likely to be made centrally.

Do some initial background research about the types of outreach activities and events that have been sponsored or hosted recently by your local public library system. This information may be available through newspaper listings, flyers or newsletters produced by the library, or simply by speaking with a desk attendant or librarian at your branch.

It's important that you have some basic knowledge of the library's past activities before you approach library administrators about making a presentation. It demonstrates that you have an interest in the library and its goals, a key ingredient in building a successful partnership. It may also give you some ideas about the outreach priorities of your branch, opportunities for presentations, and possible topics that you might present on.

If your library does not appear to have sponsored any presentations by outside speakers, don't assume that it's because they're not interested. In all likelihood, it's because no one approached them and offered to do it.

Drawing on your research, identify some possible topics for presentations that might be made at your local library that would contribute to the library's mission and priorities—and also address your own public awareness goals.

Make an appointment with the appropriate library administrator to present your ideas and discuss how you might collaborate in the future.

Partnering With Bookstores

Many Barnes and Noble, Borders, and other chain bookstores, as well as many independent stores, sponsor in-store presentations and events as part of their marketing efforts to attract more customer traffic and to position the stores as hubs in the life of the community. Presentations are made not only by authors on book tours, but also by members of the community with expertise on issues of interest to the public. The extent to which bookstores regularly schedule events of this kind, however, varies a great deal by region and community.

Getting Started

Do some initial research to determine what bookstores in your community may be hosting speeches and presentations and the themes and topics of past events.

If one or more bookstores in your area appear to have an interest in hosting outside presentations, identify some possible topics that you could present on that might be of interest to the bookstore.

Consider, also, how your presentation could be tied-in with books and other resources available at the bookstore. A presentation on relationship issues, for example, could also highlight several "self-help" books that participants might find useful. A presentation on career development could highlight recommended books on resume preparation, pursuing postsecondary education, and related topics. Or books themselves could be the focus of your presentation such as, for example, a presentation for parents on how to identify developmentally-appropriate books and other resources for children and young people, and how to address any conflicts that may develop when children seek out material that parents consider inappropriate.

Once you have a few ideas of possible presentation topics, approach the bookstore manager with your suggestions. In the case of some chains, the regional manager may be the appropriate individual to speak with. Be prepared to outline why you believe the topics would be of interest to the public. Indicate your willingness to market the presentation by contacting local media and through other appropriate means. Also be flexible and open to other suggestions and ideas that the manager may offer.

Collaborating With Other Local Businesses

You can also collaborate with other local businesses to deliver presentations to the public, such as presentations on:

- Time-management, offered at a stationery or office supply store
- Mind-body fitness, provided at a gym, health club, or YMCA
- Managing financial stress, offered at the offices of a financial planner, accountant, or H & R Block
- Coping with chronic or serious illness, provided in partnership with a hospital, medical center, or other health care facility

There are many more possibilities. Be creative!

Delivering Workplace Presentations

Many larger employers host regular "brown bag lunch" presentations from outside speakers for employees during the mid-day hours. Presentations of this kind provide an excellent opportunity to both increase public awareness of yourself and your profession and to build positive relationships with employers. These relationships may be helpful to you in the future in influencing the employer's health care purchasing decisions, including mental health coverage and the inclusion of professional counselors as reimbursable providers. For school counselors, workplace presentations provide opportunities to strengthen business support for and involvement in school guidance and counseling programs.

Workplace presentations typically focus on issues that directly relate to employee productivity and effectiveness, such as:

- managing job stress
- developing teamwork and supervisory skills
- dealing with difficult people
- balancing the demands of work and family
- substance abuse in the workplace

Other issues that impact productivity and job satisfaction more indirectlymay also be appropriate topics, such as:

- caring for an older parent
- marriage and other relationship issues
- parenting skills
- grief and bereavement
- dealing with life transitions
- depression

Workplace presentations may be coordinated by the human resources director, the employee benefits manager, or employee assistance program, depending upon the business.

Getting Started

Develop a list of possible topics for workplace presentations that you feel comfortable addressing and that may interest local employers.

Identify employers with 25 or more employees in your community by consulting your local Chamber of Commerce. Identify the appropriate employee who is responsible for organizing outside presentations. When in doubt, start with the director of human resources.

Contact each individual with a brief letter that expresses your interest in making a presentation, outlines some possible topics, and describes your education, training and other qualifications. You may also want to include an updated curriculum vita or resume.

Follow-up a week or two later with a phone call.

Teaching An Adult Education Class

Another powerful way to expand public awareness of yourself and the profession is by teaching a short-term adult or continuing education class at a local college, university, or private institution such as the Learning Annex. Depending upon the size of your community, dozens to hundreds of continuing education courses are offered to the public every year. More often than not, the instructors are not full-time speakers or presenters, but people just like you—individuals with other full-time jobs who have some specialized knowledge and expertise that can enhance peoples' lives.

Teaching an adult education class immediately boosts your visibility and credibility as an expert in the community. Though only 10-15 people may actually enroll in your course, hundreds to thousands of people will read your name and a description of your area(s) of expertise in the course bulletins and flyers that are circulated widely throughout the community. As an added bonus, you will be paid for teaching the course.

Most courses are typically offered over 3-5 sessions, but one-time sessions are also offered. Participants frequently include single men and women of all ages interested in meeting new people, retirees, individuals interested in advancing their careers, as well as individuals committed to improving themselves through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

In thinking about possible presentations that you might make, consider the needs and interests of these audiences. Also think about specific "niches" within these audiences, particularly individuals who are making important transitions in their lives, such as women or men reentering the workforce after several years of full-time caregiving at home, newly-divorced or separated individuals, career-changers, new step-parents, new retirees, or parents whose children are entering adolescence.

What areas of expertise do you have that would be meaningful to these and other groups?

Payment schedules vary considerably from institution to institution and depend as well upon your previous experience and perceived "name value" as a course instructor. They include:

- A flat payment
- A flat payment up to a certain number of enrolled students, with an additional per capita payment for each enrolled student above that amount
- A per capita payment for each student who enrolls
- A percentage, generally 10-15%, of the tuition fees paid by students enrolling in your course, with higher percentages for instructors with greater experience.

Getting Started

Identify colleges, universities, and other institutions that offer adult or continuing education classes in your community by looking in the Yellow Pages under "Schools." Course bulletins are also frequently distributed at stores and other businesses and in free newspaper display boxes on the street. You can also contact the Clearinghouse of the Association of Adult Education Centers for a list of their members at 1554 Hayes Drive, Manhattan, KS 665202 or by calling (913) 539-LERN.

To get a better sense of the scope of each institution's market, areas of interest, and course format, review past course offerings.

Develop a list of possible topics that you would be interested in presenting on, with a brief description of the material that would be covered and the target audience. Update your curriculum vitae or resume, taking care to highlight education, training, and other experiences that demonstrate your expertise on the topics upon which you are interested in presenting.

Contact the institution to make an appointment to speak with the employee responsible for deciding on course offerings. You may also make your first contact by mail, and follow-up with an appointment.

Don't Forget Handouts!

In whatever forum you make a presentation, be sure to incorporate handouts in your presentation. Handouts not only reinforce the message you are delivering and improve comprehension of your key points, they give your audience something to take home to which they can refer back, or that they can pass on to someone else who may be interested in the subject.

In designing your handouts, remember to include information about yourself and your expertise, information about the counseling profession generally, if appropriate, and how you can be contacted for additional information. If you are available for individual or group consultations or counseling, or to make similar presentations before other groups, say so clearly on your handout.

Sponsoring Your Own Seminar

Growing numbers of professional counselors in private practice sponsor free seminars and workshops for the public as part of their marketing efforts to attract potential clients. In this excerpt from **Building and Managing Your Private Practice**, *author Daniel L. Richards, Ph.D. provides some useful suggestions for creating, marketing, and conducting workshops of this kind.* **Building and Managing Your Private Practice** *can be ordered by calling (800) 422-2648 (Order #72031). The regular price is $32.95; the discounted price for ACA members is $24.95.*

Every private practitioner has a unique skill or way of working with clients; in some way, however small, each therapist is an expert. As an expert, the practitioner could put together a workshop, speech, or talk about his or her area of expertise. Because private practitioners depend on the income generated by seeing clients, consulting, and training, they often develop the attitude that whenever they do something, they should be paid. This idea is valid enough on the whole, but if carried to extremes, it can strangle practice growth by limiting the activities to those that generate a fee. A workshop or talk given to the public free of charge will increase public exposure, enhance the therapist's name as an expert, broaden the referral base, and increase the opportunities to give talks and workshops for a fee, ultimately resulting in more clients.

Planning the Presentation

When planning a free presentation, start by choosing a topic, keeping in mind that the audience will consist of lay people. Because presentations are usually geared to the professional community, it is important to remember that most lay people are not familiar with professional terminology and "jargon." Choosing a topic that is likely to appeal to the general public, and one with which the therapist feels competent, is a sure formula for attracting people. Describe the topic in simple terms, for example, "Helping Children Improve Their Self-esteem," "Ways for Single Parents to Deal with Teenagers" or "Food: How I Wish I Could Control Myself!"

Duration

Any of the topics suggested above could provide material for a day-long workshop, but for the purposes of a free presentation, a briefer format is better. Most people will pay attention for 1½ hours at the most. Plan to present for this length of time, and break the topic down to its simplest level. To help with this, use something called the 50-25 rule. To use this technique, write the talk out either in a concise written outline or a complete draft of the entire talk. Leave it for a day or so. Then come back to it and cut out 50% of the content. Leave it again for a few days, then return and cut 25% more. Doing this will reduce the subject matter to its simplest form and leave the essential substance of the topic. It may also help to remember that, although 1½ hours are available, the talk should be half that length, leaving 45 minutes for questions. The audience will come with more questions than can possibly be answered.

Handouts

The essence of good marketing is getting your name out to people. Whenever a workshop or presentation is given, participants should leave with the name, address, and telephone number of the speaker. The easiest way to do this is by preparing material for them to take along at the end of the presentation. A simple outline of the talk with the major points, no more than a single side of a page in length, with the imprint of the practice at the top makes a good handout.

The handout should be prepared carefully. Use good quality paper, and either have it duplicated on a good photocopy machine or have it printed. If the talk will be given often, or to a large number of people, it may be worthwhile to spend a little extra to have it typeset, which adds a great deal to the appearance of the handout. A typeset page can either be printed or photocopied. The emphasis here is on professional; a poorly typed outline produced on a smudgy photocopier conveys the message that quality isn't important to tthe speaker, and may keep people from seeking that practitioner's advice.

Make sure the name, address, and telephone number are clearly displayed on the page. I have often received handouts at professional presentations that lacked the presenter's name. This defeats much of the purpose of giving a free presentation. The purpose of a handout is for people to use it and keep it, whether for themselves or to give to a friend. Make it easy for people to contact the practice by imprinting the name and telephone number on all material handed out.

Location

Where should the presentation be held? In my experience, if I feel that I'm going to use my talk to enhance my client base, I hold it in my office. This can present a problem for those who have home offices because it might not be a good idea for the general public to come to the speaker's home. It might be better to hold the talk in a colleague's office, or in a church, school, or other public place. Doing this may have a negative effect on the marketing, however, because the office reflects the practitioner, and when the office can't be shown, some potential clients will judge the therapist based on someone else's surroundings.

For those who lease space or own their own offices, holding a talk in the office space allows participants to see the practitioner in his or her work surroundings. It also means that if they decide to become clients, or if they refer someone else, they know just how to find the office or provide directions for friends.

Time

Two points are important in setting the date and time of a presentation: The date should not be too close to a holiday, and these should be enough time to prepare a marketing approach and the relevant marketing material. Tuesday through Thursday evenings seem to be the best times for talks and workshops, with Tuesdays and Wednesdays drawing the greatest response. Because people generally don't like to be out after 8:30 p.m., starting times of 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. are best. Marketing studies repeatedly show that if people are going to shop or go out in the evening, most do so after supper, returning by a reasonable hour.

Marketing the Presentation

The purpose of giving a free presentation is to make the practitioner's name better known, therefore marketing the presentation is important. Target three main groups: the press, radio, and TV; professional referral sources; and former clients. Because the presentation will be free of charge, most media will respond favorably to a request for exposure as long as their requirements are met.

To announce the presentation in the press, a PSA should be sent to the appropriate editor, with a cover letter stating that the workshop is free of charge to the public, and thanking the editor for publishing it. It is also a good idea to include a photograph with the PSA.

Because this announcement will generate most of the calls received, the PSA should state that space will be limited and reservations are required. This allows the practitioner to control the size of the group; 25 is the optimum number. Not only does this keep the group size manageable, but it also helps to determine how much material to prepare for handouts. Usually after 20 people have made reservations, I tell callers that they will be added to a waiting list, and if someone cancels we will let them know. Otherwise, the talk will be given again on the following Tuesday because of the interest shown, and we will add them to that list if that is acceptable. This gives the practitioner a certain amount of flexibility. If a total of 27 calls

are received, the choice is between giving the presentation to all 27 people, or to present to 20 this week and 7 the following week. With good press coverage, a free presentation will often generate 75 or more calls, so be sure to have backup dates in mind.

Like the press, TV and radio have a commitment to PSAs, but some stations will do more than others. To let the local TV and radio stations know about the presentation, send a letter to the station manager with a brief PSA. An example would be:

> *"Drugs – What to Do to Help Your Child" will be the topic of a free lecture by (the practitioner's name or the name of the group) on Tuesday, October 5th at 7:00 p.m. For more information call (telephone number).*

Most stations devote a certain amount of time to PSAs. If the station is given sufficient notice, the practitioner may be allotted some of that time. Stations often receive more PSAs than time allows, but a professional presentation often stands a better chance of being aired than a fund-raising yard sale or public supper.

The other two target groups for marketing are professional referral sources and former clients. If the practice has a newsletter, use it to announce the upcoming presentation, making sure the referral sources and clients will receive the issue with the announcement well in advance of the presentation date. An alternative is to use a brief letter with a flier-type insert that can be posted on a wall or bulletin board. Referral sources may post this in their offices, and former clients may have access to a bulletin board at work where they could post the announcement.

The Actual Presentation

Make coffee, tea, and light snacks (fruit, crackers, donuts) available before the presentation so that when people arrive, they can mill around and get comfortable. Use charts, a blackboard, or overheads, but prepare the material so that everyone will be able to read and see it clearly. At the end of the presentation, give participants a 3 X 5 index card with a space for their name, address, telephone number, and comments on the presentation. Should you plan to hold a group session on the presentation topic, this kind of presentation can be a good way to recruit members to a group. The comment section on the card gives people the opportunity to say that they would like to see the therapist without having to reveal that publicly in front of the group. When the cards are passed out, let people know that if they would fill out the card and leave it in a box on the table at the back of the room, they could also pick up materials available such as business cards, self-disclosure brochures, practice newsletters, a bibliography on the topic of the presentation, and other items of interest. Asking participants to put the cards in a box versus leaving them on a table, or signing up on a sheet, will increase the chances that participants will give their name, possibly revealing an interest to join a group or see the practitioner on an individual basis. Emphasize the fact that the cards are confidential and any information received will not be made public. Displaying the practice material means it doesn't have to be discussed during the talk when time is limited. Most people will pick it up if it's available.

A free seminar, talk, or workshop with a good title, relevant materials, and efficient marketing will enhance the practitioner's visibility in the community and broaden the client base. Giving something for nothing, if properly done, will always bring clients. Private practitioners shouldn't be afraid to give their expertise away because it always comes back to pay dividends.

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Tips For Making An Effective Presentation

Whether you realize it or not, you already do have all the skills you need to deliver an effective speech or presentation. But we have assembled some suggestions on effective speaking from a variety of sources that may be useful to you as you prepare for your presentation.

Preparing for Your Audience

First, it's important to gather some basic information that you will want to consider in your planning and preparation, including:

- The audience's prior base of knowledge on the subject, as well their attitudes toward it;
- The room set-up, size of the audience, whether you will be using a microphone, and whether your audiovisual needs can be accommodated;
- The point in the program that you will be speaking, and what will immediately precede and follow your presentation.

Preparing Your Remarks

Unless absolutely necessary, don't plan on delivering a scripted speech. Writing out a speech word-for-word is not only very time-consuming, it often produces something that you'll find awkward and difficult to deliver.

Our writing styles tend to be more formal than our speaking styles, using longer and more complex sentence structures and often drawing on unfamiliar words that you will want to avoid in a speech.

A better bet is a clear and concise outline of the points you want to make in your presentation, jotted on notecards or sheets of paper.

Structuring Your Presentation

In *How to Speak Like a Pro*, Leon Fletcher recommends the following outline for an effective presentation:

Introduction (*15% of program duration*)

Attention-getter: Fletcher suggests keeping greetings to a minimum, focusing your opening words on getting your audience to direct its attention to the subject. Attention-getters include:

- Stating a startling fact
- Asking a question
- Presenting a quotation
- Pointing to a historic event
- Emphasizing the importance of the subject

Preview: Once you have the attention of the audience, present a clear statement of the purpose of your speech and its central ideas in no more than two sentences.

Discussion (*75% of program duration*)

Set out no more than 5 key points or issues. "Many listeners," Fletcher advises, "are not able to remember more than five points".

Support each point with specifics. Use examples from your own and others' personal experience, statistics, quotations, and other data to both support your point and expand on its meaning. Use a mix of different types of information. Don't rely solely on statistics--personal experiences are also powerful.

Conclusion (*10% of program duration*)

Announce the conclusion. Let your audience know that you are wrapping up—this will focus their attention. Then summarize or repeat the main points of your presentation.

Present a "memorable statement." This could be one of the "attention-getters" suggested above, or could be a statement that prompts or suggests appropriate action in response to the presentation.

lights, camera, action!

Working With The Media

Print and electronic media is one of the most powerful influences on our behavior, attitudes, thoughts, and perceptions. Media coverage of an issue immediately makes it important and relevant. How media presents an issue shapes our perception and attitudes towards it.

Perhaps because it is so pervasive and influential in our culture, the media is often perceived as some mysterious force that independently searches out and finds the news that it reports. But that's just not true.

While most reporters do seek out some stories on their own, a large proportion of the news you see, read, and hear was brought to their attention by a news release, a phone call, or by other means. The editor of the *Wall Street Journal* estimates that 90% of the articles it prints are generated by news releases or telephone tips. Reporters often don't have the time or resources to go out and find the news. More often than not, media professionals find the news from their desks, sorting through press releases and telephone messages to discover issues that merit further attention and investigation.

In short, you can win media attention for yourself or a program, project, or activity that you are involved with—and you don't need a publicist or a PR professional to succeed.

What you do need to succeed is:

- self-confidence and a belief in the value and importance of the information you are sharing with the media;
- a modest commitment of time and energy;
- an understanding of the needs of media professionals and how to frame and "pitch" your story ideas so that they are compelling to them;
- knowledge of the basic tools and conventions of media relations.

As renowned public relations executive Michael Levine puts it in his book *Guerilla P.R.* (1997), "this isn't brain surgery." It's something all of us can do. So let's get started!

Understanding Media Professionals

To work successfully with journalists and other media professionals, it's important to better understand what makes them "tick"—the nature and demands of their work, as well as some common personality characteristics.

In our experience, we've found that media professionals:

- **Tend to be curious and interested in people and ideas.** The more you can connect personally with a journalist and engage this curiousity, the more likely you are to win the kind of coverage you are seeking.
- **Prefer talking with "real people" rather than publicists-for-hire.** If you think you're at a disadvantage in working with the media because you haven't received extensive public relations training and aren't a pro, think again. Journalists tend to view public relations professionals with disdain and suspicion. Your inexperience is actually an asset.
- **Work in a stressful and frustrating environment.** Deadlines loom continually over the heads of everyone who works in the media.

There's little time to do all of the background research that may be appropriate for a story. Everything must be done quickly. This means that you will be far more likely to achieve the media coverage you are seeking if you do as much of the legwork and background research needed for a story as possible. Anticipate journalists' needs. Make it as easy as possible for them to write the story you are seeking.

- **Demand absolute honesty**. Reporting an error or misstatement of fact can jeopardize a journalist's job. In all of your dealings with media professionals, it is essential that you always be up-front and honest. Never stretch the truth. And never guess at an answer. If you don't know something, say so, and volunteer to try to find the information if you can. Once you've lost your credibility with a journalist, you've lost all hope of winning the kind of coverage that you are seeking.

- **Are typically generalists.** The nature of their jobs requires media professionals to know a little about a lot. Even health, education, and other "beat" reporters have such a wide scope of responsibilities that it is difficult for them to develop in-depth, specialized knowledge of any one subject. For this reason, to the extent possible, it's important to present your story in a way that does not require any previous and in-depth knowledge in order to fully comprehend it. You shouldn't be condescending or patronizing, of course, but assume that the media professional you are working with has a limited base of knowledge from which to evaluate the importance of the information you are sharing.

- **Seek stories and issues that will excite, interest, and appeal to their readers.** Nearly all media outlets are profit-making entities. They must maintain and build ratings or subscription, newsstand, and advertising sales in order to survive. The news that they report must be something that appeals to their audience in some way. Keep this uppermost in your mind as you seek to interest media professionals in your story. You don't have to (and shouldn't!) sink to sensationalism. But you should try to assume the perspective of media professionals in presenting your story to them. What makes it distinctive or unique? Why is it important that the public know about it? What are the benefits to the public? How will it enhance their lives if they know about it?

- **Thrive on attention and recognition.** If the media professional you are working with has written or broadcast something that you enjoyed or found useful and informative, don't hesitate to say so. But don't invent compliments. Most media professionals will instantly pick up on flattery that sounds insincere and will feel, as they should, insulted and resentful. So if you don't have anything nice to say...well, you know the rest.

- **Have short-attention spans.** Deadline pressure requires it. Whether you connect with a media professional through a news release, phone call, or letter, understand that they will necessarily give you only a very brief amount of time to make an impression. Use this limited time wisely. Condense and simplify your message to the most important and impressive points you want to make. ACA Past-President Gail Robinson has often noted that one of the most important lessons she learned in lobbying elected officials is that your message must be concise enough to be delivered during an elevator ride. The same rule applies to communicating with media professionals. *Keep it simple, keep it short.*

- **Are people, too.** Keeping it simple doesn't mean being brusque, officious, and impersonal. Don't be afraid to connect with media professionals on a personal level when you are seeking their attention. It'll make the encounter far less stressful for you and a whole lot more pleasureable for the both of you.

Targeting Your Media Efforts

Since media outreach can be very time-consuming, it's important that you begin by defining some narrow, targeted objectives for your efforts. Otherwise, it's easy to quickly become overwhelmed and burnt-out. Start small and build from there.

Starting small is also the only way that the full story of the counseling profession will be told in the media. Of course, you want everyone to know everything there is to know about professional counselors. But that's a long-term goal that is achieved through a series of different media pieces that focus on various aspects of the profession and what it offers to the public. There won't be any single story that tells it all.

When was the last time you saw an article or a TV news story that told you everything there is to know about, say, optometry, or any other profession? And if you came across such an article or TV news story, odds are that you would have turned the page or switched to another channel—or simply dozed off.

Telling the whole story of the counseling profession requires telling multiple, different stories that appeal to narrow segments of the public over time. Focus your efforts on telling 1 or maybe 2 of those stories in your community each year. If you're particularly ambitious, tell 3 or 4. But you cannot do it all, and you should not expect yourself to do it all. *Start small.*

To help you focus your efforts, start by asking yourself the following questions:

What narrow segments of the public are most important to you to reach with media coverage?

Is it parents? School board members, legislators, and other policy-makers? Students at a college or univer[illegible]? Business leaders who make decisions al[illegible]ealth insurance policies? Potential consum[illegible] counseling services?

Break down yo[illegible]geted audience to as narrow and specific a segment as possible, based on geographic, demographic, or other characteristics.

For example, if you want to highlight the benefits of career or employment counseling, hone in on one or two groups out of the whole universe of possible consumers of those services, such as c[illegible]regivers re-entering the workforce, or men and women considering mid-life career changes.

The narrower your audience, the more manageable and successful your media outreach will be.

What message are you seeking to deliver to your targeted audience(s)?

That public investment in school counseling programs is worthwhile? That consumers can benefit from consulting a professional counselor?

Here again, try to develop as narrow and specific a message as possible. Once you have a basic message, break it down even further, posing "fill in the blanks" type questions to yourself, such as:

> Investment in school counseling programs is worthwhile because school counseling _____.
>
> Couples with relationship problems should consult a professional counselor because/when _____.

How can your message be demonstrated or illustrated in ways that would interest or engage media professionals?

Remember, media professionals are interested in what interests their audience. "News" is something unique or distinctive that informs readers, listeners, or viewers about issues they care about.

This might include seeking media cover[illegible] of any public outreach activities you undert[illegible] such as public presentations, group participation in charitable or civic events, and so forth.

Or it might include pitching (*i.e.*, suggesting) stories to the media, such as:

- Truancy and dropout problems in the school district and how school counselors are addressing them;

- The challenges two-career couples face in maintaining healthy and satisfying relationships, with some ideas on how couples can prevent these challenges from hurting their relationships, as well as how to tell when seeing a professional counselor may be appropriate;

- How new technology is vastly expanding opportunities for people with severe disabilities to live and work independently, and the critical role that rehabilitation counselors play in helping them to take advantage of those opportunities;

- The challenges of changing careers in mid-life, with some basic "how to get started" suggestions, as well as information about how a career or employment counselor may help.

Thinking about these questions may take a little time, but will save you more time later and will make media outreach more manageable. Your answers to questions like these should give you clearer, more specific ideas about the focus of your media outreach, the media outlets you will target, and the tools you will use to reach them.

Building A Media List

Developing a thorough, targeted media list is essential to successful media outreach. To get the attention of a media professional, you first have to make sure that he or she actually receives the information you want to share.

Start by compiling a list of all of the media outlets in your community. Many of these will be easy to identify because you read, listen to, or watch them yourself. To ensure that your list is comprehensive, consult your local reference librarian. Most main branches have a copy of reference books such as *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook* that list newspapers, radio programs, and television news organizations by geographical area. Your library may also maintain its own list of other local publications that may not be included in these references, such as newsletters of community organizations.

Let the librarian know what you're looking for and what you're trying to do—he or she may have many resources that will be helpful to you.

To keep the project manageable, maintain your media outreach objectives uppermost in your mind. Don't collect information about a media outlet if you can't immediately identify a use for the information. You can always go back and expand your list later.

Once you have a basic list to work from, gather additional information about each media outlet, including address, telephone and fax numbers; frequency of publication/airing; deadlines (including deadlines for submission of calendar items); and special audience characteristics.

You should also identify key personnel at each outlet. Don't settle for one contact per outlet. The law of averages is against you. The more contacts you have, the more likely you are to gain the coverage you are seeking.

Depending upon their content, news releases, for example, could be sent to 3 or 4 different persons at a single outlet, including the editor, the calendar editor, the education reporter, and the lifestyle editor. In media outreach, the more, the merrier.

Media contacts that you may want to identify at each outlet could include:

For Newspapers

- Calendar editor
- Education reporter
- Health reporter
- Legislative/political reporter
- Features editor
- Lifestyle editor
- City editor
- Business editor
- Columnists

For Television

- Day, night, or weekend assignment editors
- Education reporter
- Health reporter
- Legislative/political reporter
- Public Affairs/Public Service Directors
- Talk show producers
- News anchors

For Radio

- News director
- Program director
- News reporters
- Public Affairs/Public Service Director
- Morning drive time disc jockey
- Afternoon drive time disc jockey
- Talk show producers

Gathering this information will typically require phone calls to each outlet. But you can acquire a great deal of it by reading, listening, and watching. This also gives you a better sense of the interests and focuses of different reporters and programs and how they may fit into your media outreach objectives.

Keep in mind, as well, that your media list is a perpetual "work in progress". If you read a story by a reporter that relates to an issue that you are interested in, you should add their name to your list. Since turnover can be high at some media outlets, you should also plan to revise and update your list at least once a year.

Sending Out News Releases

Sending news releases to local media is a basic and cost-effective public awareness tool that you should use when you want to announce:

- Special events, including speaking engagments;
- A new service or program;
- A promotion, election to office in an organization, or receipt of awards or other honors.

When considering news releases for publication, editors expect them to meet 3 basic criteria: your news must be of local significance; it must be timely; and it must be accurate, truthful and complete.

The nature of your announcement also will determine to which editor you should send your news release. Review the primary newspapers, both daily and weekly, as well as any other local news and feature publications in your community for regular columns and departments, such as health, education, family living, religion, community calendar, special events, people, etc. to identify the appropriate individuals to whom you should direct your release.

If you are announcing an event, send your release at least ten days in advance of the event to daily news outlets; for weekly outlets, send the release at least three weeks in advance.

When writing a news release, follow these guidelines:

Format

- Prepare the news release on the business letterhead of your organization, school or other institution, or private practice.

- Type your release double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Use only one side of the paper (yes, this is wasteful, but one-sided releases are what editors prefer).

- In the upper right-hand corner, type "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE". Include the date you are sending the release, either directly below "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or at the end of the release.

- On the next line, type "CONTACT:" and include your name, address, and telephone numbers (day and evening when possible).

- Leave approximately ten spaces before you type and center the headline. This gives the editor ample space to write instructions or comments.

- Whenever possible, limit the length of the release to one page.

- If you need additional pages, type and center ---MORE--- at the bottom of the first page. On subsequent pages, retype part of the headline in the top left corner and identify page numbers in the top right corner, using this notation: ADD ONE, ADD TWO, *etc.*

- Do not carry over paragraphs from one page to the next. Also avoid splitting a sentence between two pages.

- If you use multiple pages, do not staple them together.

- Use bullet points whenever you can. Leave plenty of white space; this makes your release easier to read.

- To signify the end of the release, type and center three hash marks: ###.

Content

- In general, a news release should mimic a regular news story: written in the third person and setting out factual information in an objective way.

- Your headline should be no more than one clause that succinctly states the essence of the release and who it is about, such as "AREA SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO SPONSOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS EVENT".

- The first paragraph (or lead) should be a concise statement of the most important facts: who, what, when, where and why. It should be one or two sentences at most.

- Insert additional details and supporting information in the succeeding paragraphs with the most important points mentioned first.

- Write the release so it may be cut at the end of any paragraph. Editors cut from the bottom to fit the space available.

- Keep your paragraphs as short as possible.

- While not required, incorporating quotes from yourself or others sometimes adds color to the release. They can also be used to emphasize the importance of the event or activity or to editorialize on the subject matter.

- Don't assume that the editor has the prior background knowledge needed to understand the context, purpose of the event/activity, and its importance. Include in the release all information that is needed by people from all educational levels and backgrounds to fully understand what you are announcing. And never use jargon.

Style

Press release writing has a style of its own. Two of the best reference books for style and form are *The Associated Press Stylebook*, 1997, and *The Elements of Style*, 1979, (William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White). Here are some highlights from these two texts:

- Write in a way that comes naturally. Do not use excessively flamboyant words. Write clearly and concisely.

- Write primarily with nouns and verbs. Persons, places and things in action bring writing to life. Adjectives and adverbs should be used sparingly and placed carefully. You're writing editorial copy, not advertising copy.

- Do not overstate. Exaggeration puts the reader instantly on guard. Everything you write will be suspect because the reporter or editor has lost confidence in your judgement.

- Avoid the use of qualifiers. Rather, very, little, pretty – these are nuisance words that only clutter your story.

- Do not use unnecessary adverbs after a quote. The statement itself should disclose the speaker's manner or condition without adverbs like "happily" or "enthusiastically" being added. The word "said" after a quote is sufficient.
- Beware of redundancies. Don't say "10 a.m. this morning."
- Do not use "th" or "st" following numbers. Use January 1, not January 1st.
- When in doubt, look it up. Your release will be received more positively if your grammar, spelling and style are correct.
- Revise and rewrite. Write it, read it, edit it.

A Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 1998

CONTACT: Cheryl Haas
(800)347-6647 x359

AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION TO MAKE CONTRIBUTION TO AIDSERVE INDIANA DURING 1998 WORLD CONFERENCE

When the American Counseling Association 1998 World Conference brings 3,000 professional counselors to Indianapolis March 30 through April 1, they will not only enjoy the city known for college basketball and the Indy 500—they will also seek to contribute to improving the well-being of the people of Indianapolis.

The American Counseling Association Human Concerns Fund will donate $1,800 to AIDServe Indiana, an agency whose mission is to prevent the transmission of HIV and improve the quality of life of Indiana residents who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Each year, ACA Human Concerns Fund awards funds to programs that help alleviate human suffering. The Human Concerns Fund is supported by voluntary donations from the members of the association.

"AIDServe impressed us with the breadth and quality of services it provides to people who are affected by HIV and AIDS," said Dr. Mark Pope, co-chair of the ACA Human Rights Committee, which selected AIDServe for the award. "This is our way of giving something tangible back to the community that hosts our World Conference."

--MORE--

ACA Contribution 2 **ADD ONE**

"We are delighted and honored to have been chosen," said Jack Cole, director of development at AIDServe Indiana. "Individuals and their families are struggling to deal with AIDS. This donation will make a big difference."

"Traditionally, counselor energy and skill have been focused on helping individuals resolve problems and make decisions," says Dr. Courtland Lee, ACA President. "But it is imperative that counselors also become agents of social change, intervening not only in the lives of their clients but also in the world around them. For these reasons, the theme of the 1998 World Conference is *Empowerment Through Social Action*. Supporting the work of AIDServe is one small but important way that we can help to address the needs of the people of Indianapolis."

The donation will be presented on Tuesday, March 31, 1998 at 10:30 a.m. in Hall C of the Indianapolis Convention Center and RCA Dome.

Founded in 1952, the American Counseling Association is the world's largest non-profit organization for professional counselors. Dedicated to promoting public confidence and trust in the counseling profession, the American Counseling Association serves more than 51,000 members in the United States and 50 other countries.

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Sending Photographs

Sending a photograph with your release can draw more attention to, and reinforce, the information you are sharing, but it's neither always necessary or always appropriate. Photographs can also be expensive. In general, consider including a photograph if:

- It dramatizes or illustrates the information you are presenting, *OR*
- You are seeking to build greater public recognition of your face as well as your name.

If you do decide to include photographs with your news release, follow these guidelines:

- Submit vertical or tightly cropped horizontal black and white photos, either 8" x 10" or 3" x 5" in size.
- Photographs must be taken with a 35mm camera. Polaroids and other more inexpensive cameras do not produce images suitable for reproduction.
- Be sure the photo is not too dark. Pictures always reproduce darker in print.
- Editors prefer "action" photos. Avoid static head shots or posed pictures when you can. However, if you must pose your subjects, keep the background simple and have them do something...read a plaque, study a poster, etc. If the photo is of a group, try to limit the number of people to four.
- DO NOT staple or use a paper clip on the photo. They will leave marks on the photo.
- For the same reason, DO NOT write on the back of your photo. Instead, type a caption on a separate sheet of paper and tape it to the back of the photo. Write captions with the same care that you write a news release. Clearly identify everyone in the picture, from left to right, and be sure that you have permission to include them in the photograph.
- When submitting to more than one publication, take different photographs and vary your distribution.

Using The Fax Machine

Unless you are announcing urgent, breaking news, it's best to avoid faxing a news release to media outlets. Faxes may not be read any faster or sooner than news releases sent by mail, and many editors and reporters find them annoying.

If you must send your release by fax, be sure the release is typed in black ink so that it will transmit clearly. And NEVER send a fax longer than four pages. Anything longer is likely to annoy the recipient.

Writing News Releases For Radio

News releases for radio must be short and concise. Your release should be structured as an announcement that can be read directly over the air in 10, 30, or 60 seconds.

Radio news producers and announcers generally will not edit a lengthy release that you have written for the print media to suit the radio format. That's your job!

In general, a 10 second release is 15-25 words, a 30 second release is 60-70 words, and a 60 second release is 120-150 words.

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Following Up By Telephone

To ensure appropriate attention to your release, it's important to follow up with a phone call to the recipient. Public relations professionals estimate that telephone follow-up is responsible for about 90% of the story placements generated through news releases.

If you have the time, call just prior to mailing your release or shortly thereafter. Editors and reporters may receive more than a dozen press releases on any given day. Calling ahead of time improves the chances that they will give special attention to your release when it arrives.

On or about the day that you expect that the release will have been received, follow-up with a phone call to ensure that they have received it, to determine their level of interest, and to confirm, if possible, that the material will be used.

Follow-up calls can be stressful, but don't be discouraged or intimidated. It's never fun calling busy strangers who might be rude or uninterested. But they are the most effective means of ensuring that your release is actually used.

When doing follow-up calls, you should be assertive and confident while also being sensitive to the needs and preferences of the person on the other end of the line. It's a delicate balancing act. As Michael Levine puts it in *Guerilla P.R.*, "You must feel in command even as you behave deferentially to the person you speak with."

Guidelines for Telephone Followup

Here are some suggestions that may be useful to you in achieving this delicate balance in your phone contacts with reporters and editors:

- Respect deadlines. Don't call when it's possible that the reporter or editor is under the crush of a deadline. Generally, it's a good idea to call in the morning, when reporters and editors are less likely to be facing an imminent deadline.

- Try to speak directly with the reporter or editor to whom you sent the release whenever possible. If you wind up talking to an assistant or colleague, ask them to indicate a good time to reach the person to whom you mailed the release. If the person you are trying to contact no longer works there, ask to speak to his or her replacement.

- No matter how often you try to reach the reporter or editor, only leave 2 or 3 phone messages requesting a call back. A barrage of phone messages can be a turn-off. If you do leave a message requesting a call back, specify the best times to reach you—and be sure that you are available to take the call at those times.

- When you reach the reporter or editor, immediately ask if this is a good time to talk. If it isn't, ask them to specify another, more appropriate time for a conversation.

- To jog the memory of the reporter or editor, begin by summarizing the key points of your release. Then state clearly how you hope the news outlet will use the release, such as including it in calendar listings, sending a reporter to cover the event, or running a feature story in advance of the event.

- Be enthusiastic about the information you are sharing in your release. If you don't sound interested in the subject, why should they be?

- Explain clearly why the information would be of interest to readers. Why is it important? How is it relevant? What is its news value? Put yourself in the shoes of the editor or reporter—why should they care about this?

- Be prepared to answer any and all questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to call back with the information later in the day or the following morning—and then do so.

- Encourage feedback and dialogue about the material. What are their thoughts and advice on the story, angles, and possible

approaches? This makes them more involved with the story and may make them more likely to use it.

- Gently press for a commitment or some indication of how the news outlet may use the release.

- If you don't receive a commitment, don't continue to press. Ask if there is additional information you can provide that would be helpful. Then ask when you can call back to find out how the reporter or editor intends to use the release.

- If the editor or reporter appears uninterested, ask if someone else at the publication may be interested in using the material.

- Don't be afraid to be politely "pushy" when necessary. Media professionals tend to be pushy themselves, so they'll understand. The information you are sharing is newsworthy and you are trying to help them do their jobs. Sometimes a little pushiness is necessary.

- If you receive an emphatic "no," back off. Say something like "Maybe next time I can provide something you can use. Thanks for your time."

- Don't be too familiar unless you have a relationship with the reporter or editor. Be professional and pleasant.

- If the reporter or editor is cold or rude, try not to let it faze you. Remember, everyone has bad days. And there are rude people in all professions. Don't take it personally. It has nothing to do with you.

- If your news is printed or aired, send a brief thank you note to the responsible editor or reporter. If the release concerned an event, include information about how their coverage may have contributed to the event.

Respecting Media Deadlines

- Avoid calling a weekly newspaper on a Monday or Thursday morning. These are often deadline days for weeklies. Other mornings are good, with Friday mornings being the best. Since the deadlines of weekly publications vary, it's best to check with each publication to determine their deadlines.

- Daily newspapers have various deadlines depending on whether they are published in the morning or evening. Mid-mornings—9 to 10 a.m.—are the best time to reach a contact at a morning daily; mid- to late afternoons—after 2:30 pm—may be best for reaching someone at an afternoon daily. But anytime could be a deadline for a daily print reporter. When you call, always ask if he or she has time to talk.

- The best time to call TV newsrooms is early morning, between 7 and 10 a.m. Never call between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.—when assignments are being made and editors are meeting to prepare the day's schedule—or between 4 and 7 p.m.—when the show is either on the air or about to go on the air.

Developing A Media Kit

Many organizations and individuals who are in regular contact with the media find it helpful to develop a media kit that includes additional background information that may be useful to a reporter covering a story.

Media kits, for example, could be developed for an association branch or chapter, a school guidance and counseling program, a university counseling center, a community agency or one of its programs, a private practice, or for yourself if you make regular public presentations.

Media kits are also appropriate when you are sponsoring an event that you expect media professionals to attend. They can be used prior to or on the day of the event to help reporters develop stories about the event.

Depending upon your objectives and the focus of the kit, its contents could include:

- If the kit is being developed for a special event, a copy of a news release that spells out all of the key details, including dates, times, names of participants, and names and telephone numbers of contact persons.

- A fact sheet that lists the significant details of your program—the essential who, what, where, when, and why. This might include information about populations served, purpose, accomplishments, awards received, historical information, and the names of key participants. Include the name of a contact person and telephone number(s).

- Copies of flyers, pamphlets, newsletters and other information you may use in your program or project.

- A fact sheet outlining important statistics about issues relevant to your project or program, such as the incidence of depression, adolescent suicide, and so forth.

- Photographs of key participants, following the guidelines outlined above for the use of photographs with news releases.

- Biographical information about yourself and/or key participants. As with news releases, the information should be double-spaced and under 2 pages. Begin with a sentence that sets out important information about the person as they relate to the event, project, or activity you are promoting. For example, "Throughout her career, Jane Jones has focused on improving services for at-risk children and youth..." Next, describe recent activities or accomplishments, particularly those that relate to the project or event. Then provide more historical background about the subject, including education, positions held, accomplishments, and appropriate personal information. Sum up with a concise statement relates back to the project or event you are promoting.

- Reprints of news clippings about the project, program, or activity. If you don't have clippings that are specifically focused on the project or program, include clippings of articles that are relevant to the general topic, such as articles on truancy, mental illness, divorce, and so forth. Clippings provide greater legitimacy to your project, signalling to the media that this is a topic that other reporters have thought merited coverage.

- Anything else that you think would be helpful to a reporter asked to write a story about you or your program or project. In compiling a media kit, you are essentially doing the reporter's homework for him or her, so try to be thorough.

Package your media kit in a simple pocket folder. If you have folders that are pre-printed with your name and logo on them, terrific. If not, simply type "MEDIA KIT" on a label, along with the name of your program, project, or activity and the name and telephone number of a contact, and adhere it to the front of the folder. It can be simple as that. How glossy and impressive-looking your folder is isn't important. What is important is that it includes information that is clear, comprehensive, and useful to a journalist.

Sending Media Advisories

A media advisory, an abbreviated form of a news release, is the basic tool used to attract media coverage of events and activities. It alerts local news personnel that your event is about to take place.

It is important to keep the information in a media advisory as short and simple as possible, emphasizing only the most relevant facts—the "five Ws" of who, what, when, where and why. Many publicists actually use these words as their headings. Always include the name and telephone number of someone who can be contacted by the media for more information. Also highlight any interview or visual opportunities associated with the event.

At least 7 to 10 days prior to the event, mail or deliver the media advisory to assignment desk editors at newspapers and news assignment directors at radio and television stations. You may also want to send the advisory to any reporters who have previously shown interest in the issue.

On the day before the event, fax the advisory again and follow up by telephone. On the day of the event, follow up with another telephone call.

A Sample Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY

ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITOR
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(date)
CONTACT: (your name) (telephone number)

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS COMMEMORATE COUNSELING AWARENESS MONTH WITH BOOK DONATION TO ANYTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY

WHAT: Debut of book exhibit on mental health at Anytown Public Library.
Free public presentation on ways to reduce stress.

WHEN: Saturday, April 5, 1998
10:00 am: Debut of new exhibit
11:00 am: Public lecture on stress reduction strategies

WHERE: Anytown Public Library
Main Reading Room
15 Main Street, Anytown, USA

WHO: Jane Jones, Director, Anytown Public Library
Sam Smith, President, _____ Counseling Association
Helen Harris, LPC, noted expert on stress

Jones, Smith, and Harris will be available for interviews.

WHY: The event is being sponsored by the _____ Counseling Association to commemorate Counseling Awareness Month.

Using Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are short "sound-bites" developed and aired by radio and television stations to satisfy Federal Communications Commission requirements that stations reserve time for community service announcements.

Stations are most interested in PSAs that are locally-originated, address issues specific to the community, and that are not time-limited so that they can be aired in a 2- to 4-month rotation. While "timeless" PSAs are preferred, however, some stations do run a small number of PSAs that highlight specific events and activities.

The simplest form of PSAs are spots read live on the air by an announcer. They range in length from 10 to 60 seconds.

In developing copy for a "live read" public service announcement:

- Follow the basic news release formula of the "five Ws" – who, what when, where, and why.
- Use a more informal and conversational style.
- Use short words, short sentences, and contractions where possible.
- Be factual and direct, keeping the message simple and gimmick-free.
- To provide the station with as much latitude as possible, write three different versions of your PSA: 10 second (15 to 25 words), 20 second (40 to 45 words), and 30 second (60 to 70 words)
- Follow the basic mechanics for a news release: double space, leave wide margins, one side of the paper. Type only one spot per page.
- In addition, note when you would like the spot to begin airing and the date when it should be "pulled" or no longer aired.
- Address your PSAs to the Public Service Director of local radio and television stations.

A Sample Public Service Announcement

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

CONTACT: (your name)
TELEPHONE: (day)
(eve.)

(today's date)

FOR USE: on receipt through April 30, 199X

:20 SECONDS

STATION ANNOUNCER: APRIL IS COUNSELING AWARENESS MONTH...WHEN THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES THE WORK OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS IN HELPING CHILDREN AND ADULTS MASTER THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE. FOR A FREE COPY OF *PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS HELPING PEOPLE*... CONTACT THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION AT (800) 347-6647.

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"Pitching" Feature Story Ideas to the Media

In many cases, your media outreach goals may include seeking feature stories on important issues or projects you are involved with in the community, or on different aspects of your work as a professional counselor. To do that, you'll need to "pitch" your story idea to a media professional.

Pitching begins by writing a short, succinct letter that outlines your story idea to a specific media professional who may have an interest in the idea.

It's key that you target a specific individual at a news outlet, and not simply direct your letter "to the editor" or blanket the entire staff with the same, exact letter. Take some time to review the responsibilities of key personnel and some of the issues they've covered before. Identify the media professionals who would be most interested in the story idea you are pitching.

Your letter should no more than one page. The ingredients are simple:

Bob Jones
Health and Lifestyle Editor
Anytown News
Anytown, USA

Dear Mr. Jones:

Dieting and concern about weight and physical appearance preoccupies women of all ages in our community, often to an unhealthy extent. The extraordinary value that society places upon being thin contributes to low self-esteem and depression and, in some cases, eating disorders, among women who feel that they fall short of the ideal.

As a licensed professional counselor, I have worked with many women and girls to help them develop a healthier perspective on issues of weight and dieting and a strong sense of self-esteem that is not grounded in physical appearance. I have also treated several young women with eating disorders.

Anytown News can play an important role in helping to educate women in our community about this issue. How do you know when an interest in dieting and fitness has become unhealthy or excessive? What are the signs that you or someone you know has an eating disorder? Is it appropriate for adolescent women to diet? How can you make yourself feel good about yourself no matter what your weigh?

I hope you will consider writing a story about dieting and women's self-esteem. I'd like to speak with you further about this issue and suggest others you may want to contact if you decide to write a story. I have also enclosed additional information about the issue for your review. I look forward to speaking with you about this soon.

Briefly introduce the topic or issue

Present your expertise or role in addressing the issue

Present more information

Explain why the issue is newsworthy

Suggest story ideas and possible angles for coverage

Say what you want: a story!

Offer to be a resource

Enclose more information

In writing your pitch letter:

- Be brief and to the point.
- Highlight statistics, facts, and other interesting details.
- Suggest a variety of story ideas and angles, but don't tell the media professional what to write.
- Write as if you are having a conversation with the recipient of the letter. Avoid excessive formality and jargon.

Following Up By Telephone

Follow up by telephone with the media professional several days after sending the letter to bring it to his or her attention, determine the level of interest, and, if possible, to discuss the issue further.

The rules and suggestions for making follow-up calls to the media after mailing a news release outlined on pages – apply to these follow-up phone calls as well.

If the media professional seems uninterested in the topic or issue you are "pitching," suggest that he or she use you as resource when writing stories on similar or related topics in the future. If he or she seems to have time to talk, use the conversation as an opportunity to find out more about their interests and stories they may be working on.

Above all, don't take rejection personally or as an indication that you shouldn't try to "pitch" another story idea in the future. There is enormous competition for the time and attention of media professionals.

It may take several "pitches" before you hit a home run.

Working With Television

As the number of Americans who regularly read newspapers and magazines continues to decline, television has become increasingly central in delivering news and information to the public. Unfortunately, it is also the toughest to get attention from, particularly in large markets where competition for exposure is keen.

Generally, all of the suggestions and guidelines we have outlined for working with print media also apply to working with television. However, television does have some special needs that should be attuned to.

Events Coverage

- Structure your event to offer some visual appeal. For example, invite a celebrity or well-known figure to make an appearance at the event or create an unusual and colorful presentation that will lend itself to visuals.
- Highlight the visual elements of the event in the news release or media advisory you develop for the event.
- Direct your release or advisory to the news assignment editors at least a week in advance.
- Conduct follow-up calls several days prior to the event, the morning of the event, and immediately before the start of the event.
- Be sure to identify a spokesperson who will be available for impromptu stand-up interviews at the event. Alert the TV assignment editors in advance that your spokesperson will be available to answer questions.

Feature Stories

- Examine the stories you want to tell to identify visual elements. For example, the use of hypnosis or biofeedback could be explored by staging a demonstration using volunteers, followed by interviews with the counselor about how the techniques work and their effectiveness. Similarly, finding and using career information on the Internet could be demonstrated.

- Pitch feature style stories to a specific reporter whose beat includes related issues, rather than an assignment editor, whose main concern is assigning reporters to cover breaking news.

- Offer to assist with identifying experts and setting up visuals.

- Provide plenty of written background material on the topic you are pitching.

Talk Show Appearances

- Review the format and tone of a talk show to determine whether it is an appropriate forum for you. Although audiences for sensational "trash TV" may be large, these shows are unlikely to address issues important to the profession in a thoughtful manner.

- Based on your research, determine angles or story ideas with the most appeal to the audience of a particular television talk show.

- Try to tie your story ideas to current news events and "hot topics."

- Develop dramatic or colorful visual aids to support your presentation.

- Be aware that many talk shows book guests as far as two months in advance, so unless your issue or story is extremely timely, prepare to get in line early.

- Be aware that February, May, July, and November are sweeps months, when program ratings determine future advertising rates, as well as the survival of a program. More sensational and emotional topics tend to dominate the talk show airwaves during these periods.

- Contact the talk show producer (not the talk show personality) in writing to describe the angle or issue you're pitching, your expertise in the topic, and any visual aids that be available.

- Follow-up with a phone call to ensure receipt of your letter and to re-emphasize the key elements of your pitch.

- When an interview is confirmed verbally, promptly send a confirmation letter describing your understanding of the specifics and parameters of the interview.

Working With Radio

In working with radio news professionals, you should follow the same general guidelines outlined above for working with professionals in other media, with a few exceptions:

- Since radio is an aural medium, don't invite radio to cover an event that is primarily visual unless there are celebrity interview opportunities.

- Radio exists on "sound bites" so make sure the information you share is succinct and to the point.

- Radio talk shows offer excellent opportunities to reach the public, but know the audience and general focus and tenor of a show before you pitch a story idea and/or guest appearance. This is particularly important if the show invites listeners to call in with questions for the interview subject. Different talk show hosts attract different types of listeners. Be sure that the show offers a forum that is consistent with your media outreach goals and will provide an opportunity to reach the audiences who are most important to you.

Conducting An Interview

Well, you've got your wish, you've got the media's attention. There's a reporter on the line or outside your door who wants to interview you. *Now what?*

The following are some suggestions for how you can make the most of interview opportunities:

- ***Know your interviewer.*** If possible, do some homework about the journalist who will be interviewing you. Review past articles he or she has written to give you some insight into the journalist's style and technique. If one of the journalist's past articles impressed you, feel free to share this as the interview begins.

- ***Take the time to prepare.*** Don't agree to a sudden, off-the-cuff interview unless you feel comfortable thinking quickly on your feet. Generally, you'll feel more comfortable if you have some time to prepare and collect your thoughts. If the journalist is on deadline and is looking for a quick response, don't be afraid to ask if you can call back a short time later. Taking even just a few minutes to focus and collect your thoughts before an interview may be helpful. It's great that the journalist is interested in the information you have to share, but if you're feeling rushed and unprepared, you won't be able to share that information in the manner you want.

- ***Stay focused.*** Only plan to make three or four major points in the interview. Try to relate your answers back to these key points.

- ***Saying "I don't know" is okay.*** You should be ready to answer all questions about your subject. However, if you don't have an answer, say so. The journalist will understand. If you can readily obtain the information, offer to provide it later and do so. If the question is outside your expertise, say so, and suggest others who could more appropriately respond.

- ***Don't be shaken by ignorant or inappropriate questions.*** During the opening stages of an interview, the journalist may ask very fundamental questions that reveal his or her ignorance of the topic. Use this as an opportunity to teach. The same holds true for an arrogant or hostile interviewer. You have nothing to gain by losing your temper or expressing frustration. You will remain in control of the situation if you are patient and relaxed.

- ***Always assume that everything you say is "on the record."*** Unless you have a long-time relationship with a journalist, don't ask to speak "off the record" or have your name withheld as a source. From the moment you say hello, everything you say is fair game for inclusion in an article or broadcast piece, whether the journalist is tape recording the interview or simply taking notes. Choose your words carefully.

- ***Assure accuracy.*** Publications will almost universally deny you an opportunity to review an article before it is published. They consider editing to be their responsibility. The best way that you can assure accuracy is by reviewing or summing up informally the key points you made during the interview at its conclusion ("As I mentioned earlier..." or "I can't emphasize enough the importance of..."). Also ask at the conclusion of the interview if there are any issues or questions that need further clarification.

- ***Repeat the question.*** Try repeating some of the interviewer's questions as part of your replies. When you are dealing with print journalists, in particular, this can enhance the likelihood that your quote will be used in the final article.

Special Rules for Television

- ***Keep your statements as brief and succinct as possible.*** You must be ready to get your point across in statements of 50 words or less. Although the interview may run for a long period of time, only 10 to 20 seconds of your comments may actually be used. This does not mean that you should rush your answers or speak too quickly. It does mean that you should consciously seek to get your main points across in as few words as possible.

- ***Maintain eye contact with your interviewer.*** Don't look at the camera. Ignore technicians and others in the studio. Focus on your interviewer.

- ***Dress conservatively.*** Dark suits with light blue shirts are best for men, and a solid color business dress or suit for women. Avoid white. Men should not wear boldly patterned ties. Women should avoid heavy necklaces and bracelets and large earrings and pins.

- ***If you regularly wear glasses, wear them during the interview.*** You'll look and feel more comfortable. Never wear polar-grey glasses or sunglasses, however.

- ***Speak informally and casually.*** Have a conversation with your interviewer.

- ***Keep hand gestures small and at a minimum.*** They can be distracting and jarring for the audience.

Join the ACA Spokesperson Network

The American Counseling Association regularly receives calls from journalists who are interested in speaking with professional counselors with expertise on a wide range of issues. Recent inquiries have come from the *Wall Street Journal*, *People*, *Ladies Home Journal*, the Associated Press, *Newsweek*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Los Angeles Times*, and even BBC Radio in London. ACA staff also actively "pitches" professional counselors as sources for stories to print and electronic journalists from national media outlets.

The sources we use are ACA members who have joined the ACA Spokesperson Network. Joining requires completing a form that asks you to specify the issues upon which you have expertise and want to be called upon as a source. We are always looking for new members to add to the Spokesperson Network, and if you feel comfortable talking to journalists, we encourage you to register.

To obtain a Spokesperson Network registration form, contact ACA Member Services at (800) 347-6647, extension 222 or visit the Public Policy and Information section of ACA's webpage at www.counseling.org.

Writing Letters To The Editor

Writing letters to the editors of local newspapers can also be an effective means of enhancing public awareness of the counseling profession and counseling issues. Many readers of this section of the newspaper are well-educated, concerned citizens—the individuals who influence how the community perceives professional counselors.

If they touch on the concerns and work of professional counselors, a wide range of current issues in the news, as well as particular articles, can be appropriate topics for letters to the editor. Use the letter as an opportunity to share your expertise by commenting or elaborating further on an issue. Early in the letter, be sure to mention that you are a professional counselor, and include any information that may be appropriate about your credentials and specific areas of expertise.

If you are responding to a specific article, keep in mind that some readers may have missed the original article. Reference the article clearly in your letter and provide some basic information about its contents so that all readers will be able to appreciate the points you are making.

You can also write letters to the editor to highlight commemorative events, including Counseling Awareness Month. A sample letter that you can adapt for this purpose is included below.

Before composing your letter, review the submission guidelines on format and length of letters to the editor. These guidelines can usually be found in the editorial section.

Sample Letter To The Editor For Counseling Awareness Month

To the Editor:

We are very fortunate to have in this community thousands of professional counselors, highly trained and educated to help children and adults master the challenges of everyday living. During Counseling Awareness Month in April we salute their contributions to positive mental health. More importantly, we want your readers to know about the many ways counselors serve. The preventive measures that they advocate encourage people of all ages, cultures and physical capabilities to strive to reach maximum potential in their personal lives, their education and their careers. These dedicated professionals make a difference in people's lives!

You will find professional counselors in a wide variety of settings. They bring about positive change at schools and universities and in hospitals, mental health agencies, rehabilitation facilities, business and industry, correctional institutions, religious organizations, community centers and in private practice, just to name a few. They touch our lives at just about every phase possible.

For example, you will find counselors who are dedicated to serving children with special needs. Professional counselors help by identifying these children so that the educational system can meet their needs more readily. Adolescents benefit from the programs and intervention strategies that counselors design to address and prevent alcohol and drug abuse, youth suicide, and disruptive and antisocial behavior. Adults rely on counselors when weighing career decisions or especially in stressful times of sudden work transitions, such as unemployment, promotion or reassignment. Older adults look to professional counselors when adapting to the physical and emotional transitions that accompany the aging process, including retirement, illness, disability or life on a fixed income.

These are just a few illustrations of the impact that professional counselors have on our lives. We salute them and encourage your readers to consider how professional counseling can make a difference in their lives.

Sincerely,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Participating In Counseling Awareness Month And Other Commemorative Events

April is Counseling Awareness Month!

Throughout April, professional counselors around the nation will be undertaking special projects and initiatives to promote greater public awareness of the counseling profession.

April is when it all comes together—when professional counselors set aside time to use one or more of the many ideas and strategies outlined in this guide to celebrate publicly our profession.

We hope you will join the celebration by:

- Collaborating with other professional counselors in your community on a group service activity;
- Delivering a presentation to a community organization or at a public library, bookstore, or local business;
- Sponsoring an event that you invite the public or media to attend;
- Seeking media coverage of an issue important to your work;
- Showing your pride in your profession by sharing articles from counseling publications with colleagues or even by simply hanging a *Creating Hope* •*Creating Change* poster in your office;
- Inventing your own projects to promote awareness of our profession and its contributions to improving the lives of people throughout their development.

Ideally, public awareness efforts should be integrated into the work you do every day. The reality, however, is that it's difficult for many of us to find time to make public awareness a regular part of our work. With so many things on our "to do" list, we often end up putting public awareness at the bottom of the list.

In April, if not throughout the year, we encourage you to move public awareness to the top of your "to do" list. You deserve the recognition. You make a powerful contribution to the lives of the people that you work with. ***Celebrate your work!***

Participating In Other Counselor Commemoratives

In addition to Counseling Awareness Month, there are three other important commemorative events initiated by ACA divisions that highlight the contributions and work of professional counselors.

These commemoratives also offer opportunities for public awareness events and activities. Public awareness materials, and additional information about these initiatives, may be obtained by contacting the national office of the sponsoring division.

Mental Health Counselors Week

May 1-6, 2000

Mental Health Counselors Week is the first week in May. For more information, contact:

American Mental Health Counselors Association
801 North Fairfax Street - Suite 304
Alexandria, VA 22314
(800) 326-2642

National Career Development Month

November 2000

National Career Development Month, sponsored by the National Career Development Association. For more information, contact:

National Career Development Association
4700 Reed Road - Suite M
Columbus, OH 43220
(888) 326-1750

National School Counselor Week

February 7-11, 2000

National School Counselor Week is February 17-11, 2000. For more information, contact:

American School Counselor Association
801 North Fairfax Street - Suite 310
Alexandria, VA 22314
(800) 306-4722

Participating In Other Commemoratives Throughout the Year

Numerous other groups and associations also sponsor commemorative events that relate to the work and interests of professional counselors. Participating in these commemorative activities offers valuable opportunities to raise public awareness about the counseling profession and to highlight particular aspects of counseling practice and the values and ideals of the profession. They also offer opportunities for networking and collaboration with others.

We have assembled a list of some of the commemorative events that will be held over the next year that may be of interest to you. Also included is information about how to contact sponsoring organizations to learn more about the initiative and how you may participate. Many of these organizations also offer free or low-cost public awareness materials.

January 2000

Autism Awareness Month

Autism Awareness Month is a comprehensive effort to reach out to the public to share information about autism. For more information, contact:

Autism Society of America
7910 Woodmont Avenue - Suite 650
Bethesda, MD, 20814-3015
(800) 3-Autism

February 2000

Black History Month

Black History Month recognizes the achievements and contributions of African-Americans to American life.

Wise Health Consumer Month

Wise Health Consumer Month is set aside for employers to implement and promote wellness programs to their employees. For more information, contact:

American Institute for Preventive Medicine
30445 Northwestern Highway - Suite 350
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(810) 539-1800 ext. 225

Eating Disorders Awareness Week

February 23-28, 2000

Eating Disorders Awareness Week seeks to expand public awareness of eating disorders and to challenge cultural attitudes and values that contribute to eating disorders. To obtain a free information packet, contact:

Eating Disorders Awareness
and Prevention, Inc.
603 Stewart Street - Suite 803
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 382-3587

March 2000

National Women's History Month

National Women's History Month is dedicated to reexamining and celebrating the wide range of women's contributions and achievements that are often overlooked in the telling of U.S. history. For information about National Women's History Month or for a copy of the *Women's History Catalog*, contact:

National Women's History Project
7738 Bell Road
Windsor, CA 95492
(707) 838-6000

National Collegiate Health and Wellness Week

March 2-8, 2000

National Collegiate Health and Wellness Week promotes healthy lifestyles, natural highs and mental, physical and spiritual wellness. For more information, contact:

Bacchus and Gamma Peer Education Network
P.O. Box 100430
Denver, CO 80250-04

Children and Health Care Week

March 15-21, 2000

Children and Health Care Week is an international public awareness campaign focusing on the unique needs of children and families in health care settings. For information, or to locate a participating hospital, contact:

Association for the Care of Children's Health
19 Mantua Road
Mt Royal, NJ 08061
(609) 224-1742

Deaf History Month

March 13 - April 15, 2000

Deaf History Month commemorates three events in the history of deaf Americans: the victory of the Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet University (March 13), the founding of Gallaudet (April 8), and the creation of the first public school for the deaf (April 15). For public awareness materials about the deaf community and its history, contact:

Alice L. Hagemeyer
Friends of Libraries for Deaf Access
9126 Fowler Lane
Lanham, MD 20706
(301) 572-5168

April 2000

Alcohol Awareness Month

Alcohol Awareness Month helps raise awareness among community prevention leaders and citizens about the problem of underage drinking. The month concentrates on community grassroots activities. For more information and to obtain a free awareness kit, contact:

Public Information Department
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.
12 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 206-6770

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month is a national public awareness campaign to promote the prevention of child abuse and neglect. For more information, contact:

National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse
332 S. Michigan Avenue - Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 663-3520

Take Our Daughters to Work Day

April 27, 2000

A national public education campaign sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Women in which adults are encouraged to take girls ages 9-15 to work with them for the day. The purpose of the initiative is to focus attention on the needs and concerns of girls, to raise their aspirations, and to help them stay focused on their future during adolescence. For more information, contact:

Take Our Daughters to Work Day
Ms. Foundation for Women
120 Wall Street- 33rd Floor
New York, NY 10005
(800) 676-7780

May 2000

National Mental Health Month

National Mental Health Month educates Americans about mental health and illness. For a free kit and media materials, contact:

National Mental Health Association
1021 Prince St.
Alexandria, VA 22314-2971
(800) 969-NMHA

Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month is observed throughout the United States by aging advocacy organizations, state and area agencies on aging, and Native American tribal service providers. To obtain a planning packet and other information , contact:

Moya Benoit Thompson
U.S. Administration on Aging
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 401-4541

National Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

May has been designated as National Asian/ Pacific American Heritage Month to recognize the contributions of Asians and Pacific Islanders to American life.

National Safe Kids Week

May 6-13, 2000

National Safe Kids Week focuses on helping parents and caregivers fight preventable injury, the leading killer of children ages 14 and under. National Safe Kids Week addresses the risks children face at home, at play, and while traveling. For more information contact:

National SAFE KIDS Campaign
111 Michigan Ave NW
Washington, DC 20010-2970
(202) 662-0600

National Nursing Home Week

May 14-20, 2000

National Nursing Home Week seeks to familiarize the public with long-term care facilities and the services they provide. Activities are conducted locally by long-term care facilities. For more information, contact

American Health Care Association
1201 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 842-4444

June 2000

National HIV Testing Day

June 27, 2000

National HIV Testing Day seeks to increase awareness about HIV and encourage voluntary testing and counseling. For more information, contact:

National Association of People with AIDS
1413 K Street, NW - 7th floor
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 898-0414

September 2000

National Rehabilitation Week

September 17-23, 2000

National Rehabilitation Week celebrates the determination of more than 43 million people with disabilities in America and salutes the dedicated professionals who provide rehabilitation care. The week also calls attention to the unmet needs of our nation's disabled citizens. For information and to receive a free brochure, contact:

National Rehabilitation Awareness Foundation
P.O. Box 71
Scranton, PA 18501
(570) 341-4637

National Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 - October 15, 2000

The purpose of Hispanic Heritage Month is to encourage Hispanic awareness among all U.S. citizens and to recognize the many contributions of Latinos to life in the United States.

Banned Books Week

September 23 - 30, 2000

Banned Books Week seeks to promote greater public awareness about the importance of the freedom to read, the freedom of expression, and the harm censorship causes to our society. For more information, contact:

Banned Books Week
American Library Association
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 280-4332

October 2000

Month of the Young Adolescent

Initiated by the National Middle School Association in collaboration with ACA and 28 other national organizations, the Month of the Young Adolescent seeks to educate parents and the general public about the needs of young adolescents. For more information, contact:

National Middle School Association
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive - Suite 370
Columbus, Ohio 43231
(800) 528-NMSA

ACA will also be producing a Month of the Young Adolescent resource guide for members. Watch for an announcement in the August *Counseling Today*.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, local programs, state coalitions and national organizations conduct awareness campaigns and special events to educate the public about the problem of domestic violence and its effect on the victims and community. To learn more about how you can participate, contact:

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
P. O. Box 18749
Denver, CO 80218-0749
(303) 839-1852

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October has been designated National Disability Employment Awareness Month by the President and Congress to encourage public awareness events and activities that promote implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the employment of persons with disabilities. The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities produces a kit of educational resources that can be used in carrying out public awareness activities. For more information, contact:

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, NW - Suite 300
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 376-6200

Child Health Day

October 5, 2000

Tuesday, October 5th is National Child Health Day, originally proclaimed by President Coolidge in 1928. Its goal is to draw attention to the status of children's health and the importance of comprehensive school health education. For a free packet of information, contact:

U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
(301) 443-0205

World Mental Health Day

October 10, 2000

World Mental Health Day serves as a focal point for raising public awareness of mental health issues worldwide. Public events such as conferences, ceremonies, advice caravans, and pamphlet distributions are organized by groups in more than 100 countries on six continents. For more information and a planning kit, contact:

World Federation of Mental Health
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 223314
(703) 838-7543

National Coming Out Day

October 11, 2000

National Coming Out Day commemorates the 1987 March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. The initiative seeks to increase public awareness of the diversity of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, and to promote honesty and openness about being gay, lesbian, or bisexual in the workplace, on campus, and in interactions with friends and loved ones. To host a National Coming Out Day event or to obtain a coming out resource guide, contact:

National Coming Out Project
Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
1101 14th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
(800) 866-NCOD

November 2000

National Alzheimer's Disease Month

The purpose of National Alzheimer's Disease Month is to increase awareness of Alzheimer's disease, the most common and incurable form of dementia. For more information contact:

Alzheimer's Association
919 N. Michigan - Suite 1000
Chicago, IL 60611
(800) 272-3900

National American Indian Heritage Month

November has been designated as National American Indian Heritage Month to celebrate the contributions of native peoples to American life. For more information contact:

American Indian Heritage Foundation
6051 Arlington Boulevard
Falls Church, VA 22044
(703) 237-9490

National Hospice Month

National Hospice Month seeks to promote greater awareness of hospice care and to honor patients, family members, hospice professionals and volunteers. For more information contact:

Hospice Association of America
228 Seventh Street SE
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 546-4759

American Education Week

November 14-20, 2000

American Education Week focuses attention on the importance of education and the opportunities it creates for all persons. The theme for 1999 will be announced this summer. For more information contact:

National Education Association
1201 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-7262

Great American Smokeout

November 16, 2000

The Great American Smokeout celebrates smoke-free environments. The day is sponsored by the American Cancer Society and fosters community-based activities that encourage smokers to quit for at least 24 hours. For more information, contact:

American Cancer Society
1599 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329
(404) 329-5735

December 2000

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month takes place in December because statistics indicate that impaired driving is at its peak during this month. The month is a time when communities nationwide join together to conduct public awareness and enforcement campaigns to prevent impaired driving. For more information, contact:

National Commission Against Drunk Driving
1900 L Street, NW - Suite 705
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 452-6004

Other Suggestions?

Have we missed a commemorative event that you think professional counselors should know about and consider participating in?

Call us at (800) 347-6647, extension 359 to share your suggestions and ideas.

Helpful Resources for Use in Public Awareness Materials

To assist you in your public awareness activities, we have assembled a number of materials developed by ACA and ACA divisions that describe various aspects of professional counseling practice. You may find them useful in crafting handouts and brochures for the public, news releases for the media, and developing other types of public awareness materials.

ACA has also produced a color brochure, *Professional Counselors Helping People...* that offers an overview of the counseling profession for the media and the public. Copies of the brochure, in sets of 25, are available for purchase for $10 from Trexco Associates. An order form is included in this publication. The brochure can be included with news releases, made available at special events, and used in other ways.

Role Statement: The School Counselor

The American School Counselor Association developed the following statement in 1990.

The American School Counselor Association recognizes and supports the implementation of comprehensive developmental counseling programs at all educational levels. These programs are designed to help all students develop their educational, social, career, and personal strengths and to become responsible and productive citizens. School counselors help create and organize these programs, as well as provide appropriate counselor interventions.

School counseling programs are developmental by design, focusing on needs, interests, and issues related to the various stages of student growth. There are objectives, activities, special services and expected outcomes, with an emphasis on helping students to learn more effectively and efficiently. There is a commitment to individual uniqueness and the maximum development of human potential. A counseling program is an integral part of a school's total educational program.

The School Counselor

The school counselor is a certified professional educator who assists students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Three generally recognized helping processes used by the counselor are counseling, consulting, and coordinating: 1) Counseling is a complex helping process in which the counselor establishes a trusting and confidential working relationship. The focus is on problem-solving, decision-making, and discovering personal meaning related to learning and development; 2) Consultation is a cooperative process in which the counselor-consultant assists others to think through problems and to develop skills that make them more effective in working with students; 3) Coordination is a leadership process in which the counselor helps organize and manage a school's counseling program and related services.

School counselors are employed in elementary, middle/junior high, senior high

and postsecondary schools. Their work is differentiated by attention to age-specific developmental stages of growth and related interests, tasks, and challenges. School counselors are human behavior and relationship specialists who organize their work around fundamental interventions.

Counselor interventions have sometimes been referred to as functions, services, approaches, tasks, activities, or jobs. They have, at times, been viewed as roles themselves, helping to create the image of the counselor. In a comprehensive developmental counseling program, school counselors organize their work schedules around the following basic interventions:

- ***Individual Counseling.*** Individual counseling is a personal and private interaction between a counselor and a student in which they work together on a problem or topic of interest. A face-to-face, one-to-one meeting with a counselor provides a student maximum privacy in which to freely explore ideas, feelings, and behaviors. School counselors establish trust and build a helping relationship. They respect the privacy of information, always considering actions in terms of the rights, integrity, and welfare of students. Counselors are obligated by law and ethical standards to report and to refer a case when a person's welfare is in jeopardy. It is a counselor's duty to inform an individual of the conditions and limitations under which assistance may be provided.

- ***Small Group Counseling.*** Small group counseling involves a counselor working with two or more students together. Group size generally ranges from five to eight members. Group discussion may be relatively unstructured or may be based on structured learning activities. Group members have an opportunity to learn from each other. They can share ideas, give and receive feedback, increase their awareness, gain new knowledge, practice skills, and think about their goals and actions. Group discussions may be problem-centered, where attention is given to particular concerns or problems. Discussions may be growth-centered, where general topics are related to personal and academic development.

- ***Large Group Guidance.*** Large group meetings offer the best opportunity to provide guidance to the largest number of students in a school. Counselor first work with students in large groups wherever appropriate because it is the most efficient use of time. Large group work involves cooperative learning methods, in which the larger group is divided into smaller working groups under the supervision of a counselor or teacher. The guidance and counseling curriculum, composed of organized objectives and activities, is delivered by teachers or counselors in classrooms or advisory groups. School counselors and teachers may co-lead some activities. Counselors develop and present special guidance units which give attention to particular developmental issues or areas of concern in their respective schools and they help prepare teachers to deliver part of the guidance and counseling curriculum.

- ***Consultation.*** The counselor as a consultant helps people to be more effective in working with others. Consultation helps individuals think through problems and concerns, acquire more knowledge and skill, and become more objective and self-confident. This intervention can take place in individual or group conferences, or through staff-development activities.

- ***Coordination.*** Coordination as a counselor intervention is the process of managing various indirect services which benefit students and being a liaison between school and community agencies. It may include organizing special events which involve parents or resource people in the community in guidance projects. It often entails collecting data and disseminating information. Counselors might coordinate a student needs assessment, the interpretation of standardized tests, a child study team, or a guidance related teacher or parent education program.

The Preparation of School Counselors

School counselors are prepared for their work through the study of interpersonal relationships and behavioral sciences in graduate education courses in accredited colleges and universities. Preparation involves special training in counseling theory and skills related to school settings. Particular attention is given to personality and human development theories and research, including career and life-skills development; learning theories, the nature of change and the helping process; theories and approaches to appraisal, multi-cultural and community awareness; educational environments; curriculum development; professional ethics; and, program planning, management, and evaluation.

Counselors are prepared to use the basic interventions in a school setting, with special emphasis on the study of helping relationships, facilitative skills, brief counseling; group dynamics and group learning activities; family systems; peer helper programs, multi-cultural and cross-cultural helping approaches; and, educational and community resources for special school populations.

School counselors are aware of their own professional competencies and responsibilities within the school setting. They know when and how to refer or involve other professionals. They are accountable for their actions and participate in appropriate studies and research related to their work.

Responsibility to the Profession

To assure high quality practice, counselors are committed to continued professional growth and personal development. They are active members of the American Counseling Association and the American School Counselor Association, as well as state and local professional associations which foster and promote school counseling. They also uphold the ethical and professional standards of these associations.

School counselors meet the state certification standards and abide by the laws in the states where they are working. Counselors work cooperatively with individuals and organizations to promote the overall development of children, youth, and families in their communities.

Frequently Asked Questions About Career Counseling

Developed by the National Career Development Association

1. *What is a career counselor?*

Career counselors hold a graduate degree in counseling with a specialization in career counseling. Services of career counselors differ, depending on the counselor's level of competence, the setting, client needs, and other factors. National Certified Career Counselors, Registered Professional Career Counselors, and other professional career counselors help people make and carry out decisions and plans related to life/career directions.

2. *What do career counselors do?*

Strategies and techniques of professional career counselors are tailored to the specific needs of the person seeking help. It is likely that the career counselor will do one or more of the following:

- Conduct individual and group counseling sessions to help clarify life/career goals

- Administer and interpret tests and inventories to assess abilities, interests, and so forth, and to identify career options
- Encourage exploratory activities through assignments and planning experiences
- Utilize career planning systems and occupational information systems to help individuals better understand the world of work
- Provide opportunities for improving decision-making skills
- Assist in developing individualized career plans
- Teach job hunting strategies and skills and assist in the development of resumes
- Help resolve potential personal conflicts on the job through practice in human relations skills
- Assist in understanding the integration of work and other life roles
- Provide support for persons experiencing job stress, job loss, and/or career transition

3. ***What training and credentials do career counselors have?***

The designation "National Certified Career Counselor" signifies that the career counselor has achieved the highest certification in the profession. Furthermore, it means that the Career Counselor has:

- Earned a graduate degree in counseling or a related professional field from a regionally accredited institution
- Completed supervised counseling experience which included career counseling
- Acquired a minimum of three years of full-time career development work experience
- Successfully completed a knowledge-based certification examination

Professional career counselors may also be trained in a one-or two-year graduate level counselor preparation program with a specialty in career counseling. They may be licensed by state counselor licensure boards or certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors.

4. ***How can I find a career counselor?***

A listing of National Certified Career Counselors in your state may be obtained from:

National Board for Certified Counselors
3-D Terrace Way
Greensboro, NC 27403-3660
(336) 547-0607

Many states have counselor licensure laws and state boards that oversee this licensing process. Check your local phone directory under state government or check with your public library for the address and phone number of your state counselor licensing board. You may contact them for a list of licensed counselors or to check the credentials of a specific counselor.

Use the telephone yellow pages. Check under career counseling. As you scan names, check to see if they describe their credentials in the yellow page ad. When you call, ask these types of questions:

- Are you a National Certified Career Counselor?
- Are you licensed to practice counseling in this state?
- Are you a member of a national or state career counseling professional association?
- What special training do you have in the area of career?

Ask friends and family for the names of career counselors with whom they have worked.

Check with the library to find lists of career services in educational and community agencies such as colleges, community colleges, public school adult education programs, state employment service, vocational rehabilitation, or special career services.

5. ***What do career counseling clients have the right to expect?***

You may ask career counselors for a detailed explanation of services, fees, time commitments, and a copy of their ethical guidelines. Select a counselor who is professionally trained, who specifies fees and services upon request, and who lets you choose the services you desire. Make certain you can terminate the services at any time, paying only for services rendered.

Career counseling requires the expertise of a trained professional. Be wary of services that promise you more money, quick promotions, or guaranteed resumes. Career issues are usually complex and require a multifaceted approach by a career counselor who has extensive education, training, and experience. Be skeptical of services that make promises of more money, better jobs, resumes that get speedy results, or an immediate solution to career problems. Professional career counselors are expected to follow the ethical guidelines of organizations such as the National Career Development Association, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the American Counseling Association.

Professional codes of ethics advise against grandiose guarantees and promises, exorbitant fees, breaches of confidentiality, and related matters of misconduct. You may wish to ask for a detailed explanation of services offered, your financial and time commitments, and a copy of the ethical guidelines used by the career counselor or service you are considering.

Ask any counselor you are considering for a detailed explanation of services (career counseling, assessment, employment search strategy planning, resume writing, and so forth). Make sure you understand the services, your degree of involvement, and your financial commitment.

6. ***What are some questions I can ask myself about my own career?***

As you think about your career, it might help to ask yourself these questions:

- How satisfied are you with your current job? What are the main satisfactions and dissatisfactions? What are your hopes and fears regarding your current job?
- What can you do to make your current job better? How might you change aspects of your job? How might you change work groups or projects? How might you change the meaning of work in your life? If you decided to do so, how might you change jobs?
- What are your goals related to work and your career? In the near future? In the long-term future? What are your long and short term priorities for work and your career?
- What actions, if any, do you need to take regarding your job and career? Now? In three months? Long term?

7. ***What did American adults say about their careers in a recent NCDA/NOICC Gallup Survey?***

Adults want quality career counseling and information

- 72% would seek more information on career options if starting over
- 80% (who sought it) found professional career counseling helpful
- 78% found career information available
- 53% see a need for more education or training to increase their earning power

Adults perceived a need for more education and training

- 48% of college graduates
- 66% of those with some college education
- 47% of high school graduates
- 41% of non high school graduates

What do adults expect to do for the next three years?

- 62% expect to stay with current employer
- 22% expect voluntary job changes
- 52% like their jobs and do not want to leave

Did adults consciously plan their career?

- 32% started present job or career following a plan
- 26% started present job or career by chance

The following fact sheet was developed by ACA for use with legislators and the media

Professional Counselors as Providers of Mental Health Care

Licensed professional counselors provide quality mental health and substance abuse care to millions of Americans and are recognized as an important provider of preventive behavioral health services and services in rural areas. Roughly 80% of managed behavioral health care companies either employ or contract with licensed professional counselors (*Business Insurance*, 1994), and counselors comprise a large percentage of the workforce employed in community mental health centers, agencies, and organizations.

The practice of professional counseling includes, but is not limited to, the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders, including addictions; psychoeducational techniques aimed at the prevention of such disorders; consultation to individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations; and research into more effective therapeutic treatment modalities. Counselors are trained in the provision of counseling and therapy, as well as the etiology of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

State Licensure Requirements

Over 80,000 professional counselors are licensed or certified in 45 states and the District of Columbia. Licensure requirements typically include:

Education 48 to 60 hours of graduate-level training, including a master's or doctoral degree in counseling from a regionally-accredited institution of higher education.

Experience completion of 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience, performed within two years.

Examination passage of the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or a similar state-developed exam.

Ethics adherence to a strict Code of Ethics in professional practice.

In states without licensure or certification laws, professional counselors may be certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).

Severity of Illnesses Treated by Mental Health Professionals

Discipline	*Chronically and Persistently Mentally Ill*	*Moderate to Severely Impaired (DSM-IV)*	*Life, Stress and Coping Problems*
Professional Counselors	**11%**	**36%**	**40%**
Psychiatrists	29%	40%	30%
Psychologists	11%	36%	29%
Social Workers	9%	41%	35%
Marriage and Family Therapists	12%	36%	39%

Average Duration of Treatment

Number of Sessions	*All Therapists*	***Professional Counselors***	*Psychiatrists*	*Psychologists*	*Social Workers*	*Marriage and Family Therapists*
0-3 sessions	2.8%	**9%**	3%	4%	2%	1%
4-6 sessions	10%	**18%**	6%	7%	11%	5%
7-10 sessions	28%	**34%**	22%	23%	32%	33%
11-15 sessions	29%	**17%**	27%	22%	20%	32%
15+ sessions	34%	**26%**	37%	40%	34%	24%

Source: National survey of mental health professionals in full- or part-time private practice conducted by Practice Strategies, December 1997

Services Offered by Mental Health Professionals

Services	*All Therapists*	***Professional Counselors***	*Psychiatrists*	*Psychologists*	*Social Workers*	*Marriage and Family Therapists*
Individual Therapy	96%	**97%**	94%	98%	95%	96%
Group Therapy	45%	**60%**	34%	41%	45%	51%
Pain Control	20%	**17%**	16%	27%	12%	15%
Biofeedback	8%	**9%**	5%	14%	4%	4%
Chronic Illness	29%	**24%**	27%	33%	26%	23%
Substance abuse treatment	19%	**33%**	15%	15%	17%	21%
Psychological testing	40%	**25%**	35%	69%	13%	21%

Most Frequently Paid Fees for Individual Therapy Sessions (medians)

Source of Payment	***Professional Counselors***	*Psychiatrists*	*Psychologists*	*Social Workers*	*Marriage and Family Therapists*
Direct pay patients	**$65**	$100	$95	$75	$75
Managed care payments	**$60**	$80	$75	$60	$60
Third party payments	**$70**	$94	$90	$70	$70

Source: 1997 Fee, Practice, and Managed Care Survey, Ridgewood Financial Institute, Inc. (May 1997)

Scope Of Practice For Rehabilitation Counseling

The following has been adopted by the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association, the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association, the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, and the Council on Rehabilitation Education.

I. Assumptions

- The Scope of Practice Statement identifies knowledge and skills required for the provision of effective rehabilitation counseling services to persons with physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities as embodied in the standards of the profession's credentialing organizations.

- Several rehabilitation disciplines and related processes (e.g., vocational evaluation, job development and job placement, work adjustment, case management) are tied to the central field of rehabilitation counseling. The field of rehabilitation counseling is a specialty within the rehabilitation profession with counseling at its core, and is differentiated from other related counseling fields.

- The professional scope of rehabilitation counseling practice is also differentiated from an individual scope of practice, which may overlap, but is more specialized than the professional scope. An individual scope of practice is based on one's own knowledge of the abilities and skills that have been gained through a program of education and professional experience. A person is ethically bound to limit his/her practice to that individual scope of practice

II. Underlying Values

- Facilitation of independence, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities in employment and the community.

- Belief in the dignity and worth of all people.

- Commitment to a sense of equal justice based on a model of accommodation to provide and equalize the opportunities to participate in all rights and privileges available to all people; and a commitment to supporting persons with disabilities in advocacy activities to enable them to achieve this status and empower themselves.

- Emphasis on the holistic nature of human function which is procedurally facilitated by the utilization of such techniques as:

  1. interdisciplinary teamwork.
  2. counseling to assist in maintaining a holistic perspective.
  3. a commitment to considering individuals within the context of their family systems and communities.

- Recognition of the importance of focusing on the assets of the person.

- Commitment to models of service delivery that emphasize integrated, comprehensive services which are mutually planned by the consumer and the rehabilitation counselor.

III. Scope of Practice Statement

Rehabilitation counseling is a systematic process which assists persons with physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities to achieve their personal, career, and independent living goals in the most integrated setting possible through the application of the counseling process. The counseling process involves communication, goal setting, and beneficial growth or change through self-advocacy, psychological, vocational, social, and behavioral interventions. The specific techniques and modalities utilized within this rehabilitation counseling process may include, but are not limited to:

- assessment and appraisal;
- diagnosis and treatment planning;
- career (vocational) counseling;
- individual and group counseling treatment interventions focused on facilitating adjustments to the medical and psychosocial impact of disability;
- case management, referral, and service coordination;
- program evaluation and research;
- interventions to remove environmental, employment, and attitudinal barriers;
- consultation services among multiple parties and regulatory systems;
- job analysis, job development, and placement services, including assistance with employment and job accommodations; and
- the provision of consultation about, and access to, rehabilitation technology.

IV. Selected Definitions

The following definitions are provided to increase the understanding of certain key terms and concepts used in the Scope of Practice Statement for Rehabilitation Counseling.

Appraisal: Selecting, administering, scoring, and interpreting instruments designed to assess an individual's attitudes, abilities, achievements, interests, personal characteristics, disabilities, and mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders as well as the use of methods and techniques for understanding human behavior in relation to coping with, adapting to, or changing life situations.

Diagnosis and Treatment Planning: Assessing, analyzing, and providing diagnostic descriptions of mental, emotional, or behavioral conditions or disabilities; exploring possible solutions; and developing and implementing a treatment plan for mental, emotional, and psychosocial adjustment or development. Diagnosis and treatment planning shall not be construed to permit the performance of any act which rehabilitation counselors are not educated and trained to perform.

Counseling Treatment Intervention: The application of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and systemic counseling strategies which include developmental, wellness, pathologic, and multicultural principles of human behavior. Such interventions are specifically implemented in the context of a professional counseling relationship and may include, but are not limited to: appraisal; individual, group, marriage, and family counseling and psychotherapy; the diagnostic description and treatment of persons with mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders or disabilities; guidance and consulting to facilitate normal growth and development including educational and career development; the utilization of functional assessments and career counseling for persons requesting assistance in adjusting to a disability or handicapping condition; referrals; consulting; and research.

Referral: Evaluating and identifying the needs of a counselee to determine the advisability of referrals to other spedalists, advising the counselee of such judgments, and communicating as requested or deemed appropriate to such referral sources.

Case Management: A systematic process merging counseling and managerial concepts and skills through the application of techniques derived from intuitive and researched methods, thereby advancing efficient and effective decision-making for functional control of self, client, setting, and other relevant factors for anchoring a proactive practice. In case management, the counselor's role is focused on interviewing, counseling, planning rehabilitation programs, coordinating services, interacting with significant others, placing clients and following up with them, monitoring a client's progress, and solving problems.

Program Evaluation: The effort to determine what changes occur as a result of a planned program by comparing actual changes (results) with desired changes (stated goals), and by identifying the degree to which the activity (planned program) is responsible for those changes.

Research: A systematic effort to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative or qualitative data that describe how social characteristics, behavior, emotions, cognition, disabilities, mental disorders, and interpersonal transactions among individuals and organizations interact.

Share Your Suggestions for Other Public Awareness Projects and Activities!

If you've carried out a public awareness project that you think other professional counselors might be interested in emulating, we hope you will take a few minutes to share it with us. This guide is a work in progress and we'd love to add your ideas and suggestions for other activities. We're also interested in including copies of brochures and other public awareness materials that you have developed.

Please share your success stories, suggestions, and ideas with Cheryl Haas, ACA Manager of Professional Services and Special Projects, by calling (800) 347-6647 x 359 or by writing the American Counseling Association, 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304.